

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Hello, friends. It's been quite a while since I've written anything related to role-playing games. I really miss the hobby. It's been so long since I've heard dice clatter and too long since I've sat around the table with good friends, laughing and swapping lies. I've also been itching to get back into the routine of zine publishing, so I hope Iridia fills that need. I hope to publish this little single sheet every week. It's going to be tough, but I really think I can do it. I plan on writing about things in the hobby that catch my eye and then share them. Iridia will cover a variety of systems, including my out of print favorites, such as Basic D&D and Star Frontiers. Long live the 96 page, saddle stitched format! I certainly hope you enjoy the read. Do be sure to e-mail me with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Faces on the Battlefield

a continuing chronicle of the winter war

"I want to be free, both in the flesh and in spirit."

Bondsman Keller

Bondsman Keller wants to be free. He dreams of owning a farm, marrying, fathering children and being assured of a peaceful slumber after death. Until then, he has quite a bit of work to do.

Throughout the Fallen South, where Keller grew up, common citizens are bound to a particular Necromancer Lord. In turn, these Necromancer Lords serve Veoden, a dark god of death and decay. When a commoner reaches adulthood, he or she is usually cursed by the regional Necromancer Lord. This curse ensures that after death the body can be animated to do that wizard's bidding. No other wizard can animate the corpse. It's not so different from being branded like cattle.

The thought of his corpse being turned into a zombie, teeming with worms and maggots, turns Keller's stomach. To avoid such a fate he must seek out and pay a wizard to dispel the curse. Perhaps a wizard can even weave a spell to ensure that no wizard is able to animate his body after death. Sadly, Keller has never heard of a wizard who wasn't a necromancer, so there are doubts he will ever be successful. Nevertheless, Keller is hopeful. Perhaps his fate lays with the Northern Kingdom, a free land where brave soldiers battle the Necromancer Lords in the name of their gods, Iridia and Elyswen.

As Keller advances, he will most likely transition into the fighter class. Keller will try to improve his Strength and Constitution, as well as invest in feats to improve his ability as a swordsman. Heavier shield and armor are a must!

Bondsman Keller, male human War1; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 165lbs); CR ½; HD d8+1; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 13 (+2 leather, +1 light wooden shield), touch 10, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2; **Melee:** Longsword +3 (+1 BAB, +1 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 11, Con 13 (+1), Int 10, Wis 12 (+1), Cha 11.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +2, Listen +3, Spot +3, Swim +3; Iron Will, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Leather armor, small wooden shield, long sword, backpack, blanket, water skin, three torches, 50' rope, 2 sp, 5 cp.

I dream in 25mm.

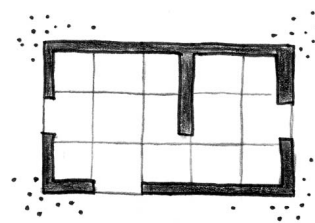
miniatures and terrain

The Necromancer Lords used their undead legions expertly during the Winter War. Impervious to the cold, skeletons marched into enemy villages, setting fire to the dry, thatched roofs. When the inhabitants fled the conflagration, they faced snow, ice and being chased by skeletal wolves. The wolves hunted without mercy, nor fatigue.

In the spring the humans rallied, driving south and smashing the skeleton forces with their heavy cavalry. Not all the skeletons were trampled, however. Some Necromancer Lords withdrew their forces into the ruined villages, forcing their enemy to dismount and fight house to house.

Accompanying this article is a rough map typical of the ruined cottages littering the border between the Necromancer Lords' territory and the Northern Kingdom. The cottage is a simple structure, some 25' long by 15' wide. It features two rooms, a main room for cooking and socializing and a small bed chamber. Any undead lurking in the cottage will usually be in the bedchamber and will attack anyone who enters the building.

I'm going to use this floor plan as the template for a piece of terrain I want to build. I've been thinking about ways to quickly construct inexpensive, but good-looking, ruins. I think I've finally perfected a method I will share with you next week. In the meantime, scribble this map down onto a piece of paper, stock it with a human skeleton, then allow Bondsman Keller to charge in and earn some much needed experience points!



Ruined Cottage

one square = 5'

Human Warrior Skeleton: Medium undead; CR 1/3; HD d12; hp 6; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AL NE;

Armor: AC 15 (+1 dex, +2 natural, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp +1;
Melee: Longsword +1 (+1 str) (d8+1, 19-20/x2) or claw +1 (d4+1);

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 13 (+1), Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1 (-5).

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, undead traits.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

A few weeks ago, I received "Idylls of the Rat King" from Goodman Games. (goodmangames.com) Written for D&D 3.5 by Jeffrey Quinn for character levels 1-3, Idylls is a great read and I'm sure it'd be fun to play. The scenario features a wererat

bard, Lawrence Gannu, who is seeking vengeance against the village of Silverton. Personally, I think the wererat has a great motive. Lawrence's grandfather was murdered by the villagers and his progeny cursed, resulting in the lycanthropy that ruined Lawrence's life.

Sadly, Lawrence opts for violence in an attempt to reclaim family honor. He links up with a group of goblins and a filthy gnome, then begins raiding caravans transporting silver from Silverton. Slain caravan guards are then brought back to the mine where the gnome, Narzy Hilspek, animates them as zombies to dig for silver. It's a rather efficient, if depraved, operation. It's up to the PCs to bring it to an end!

There are some battles that will be extremely tough, however. I would not be surprised if there were a few fatalities within a party. In one battle, the PCs will catch a lightning bolt from a 5th level Goblin Wizard! Furthermore, the party may face a vampire if they stumble across its extremely-hard-to-find resting place. If the PCs find

the vampire's lair, there will certainly be a PC death. All in all, I really enjoyed reading this scenario and look forward to buying other titles in the "Dungeon Crawl Classics" line. For \$10.99, you cannot lose!



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On Point

Back again for a second installment! I'm working on ways to keep the zine coming out quickly and easily by learning time-saving tricks. This week I figured out that I can create a .pdf of Iridia online at adobe.com, then e-mail the file to the Staples around the corner for printing and easy pick-up. Nice! Space is precious, so enough of my babble. Do be sure to e-mail me with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Iron Rations

basic d&d

I bought the Basic D&D rules on EBay so that I could re-create some of the NPCs, characters and adventures that filled my afternoons in 1985. Yes, the rules are a bit simplistic by today's standards, but that's actually a good thing. It amazes me that new players make their way into the hobby these days when to do so requires the reading of a 250+ page rulebook. No wonder why so many young people instead opt for WoW. Eh, enough of my old man ranting and raving. Instead, I want to bore you with Aithne of Far Isle and Abel Artone, two adventuring companions from twenty years back.

I don't recall the name of my own character, nor his race. I believe he was an elf, though, because back then every 12 year old boy played one. Allow me to take a bit of creative license as I seek to fill in the gaps in my memory. Perhaps all the vodka I drank in college (or the shame of my pimply adolescence) obscured those particular memories. I'll call him Devon Ashwood, which seems like a pretty decent name for a Basic D&D elf.

Devon was brash, inexperienced and cocky. How efficient for Devon to pack so many undesirable personality traits into one character! Hungry for adventure, Devon traveled to the Shady Dragon Inn, which was a large, fortified hostel near the Borderlands. At the inn he met an intriguing elf woman named Aithne of Far Isle. She was a bit older than Devon and far more experienced. Of course, Aithne found Devon to be rather irritating. I believe that Aithne only agreed to explore some nearby ruins with Devon in the hopes of seeing him savaged by a beastie. Aithne and I soon met a young human fighter named Abel Artone, who struck me as a rather surly fellow. Our group was complete!

Our first adventure together involved a solitary ogre. The ogre had been spotted near the Southern Way, a frequently traveled road. The presence of the ogre alarmed local traders, who feared that the creature was a scout for a war party. Therefore, our trio was hired to investigate. Next week, I'll share more about our group.



I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Last week I sketched a floor plan for a ruined cottage I wanted to build. Let's take it from blueprint to battle-ready model!

I used foam board for the walls of the cottage. The foam board is light, yet durable, with an outer skin that is easy to cut. I purchased a 20" x 30" sheet for \$0.87, then cut it with a hobby knife I bought for \$4.99. I used a nifty cutting board that cost \$18.00 to help me keep the lines straight. The model rests upon a 6" square base. The long sections are 5" long and 2.5" high. The shorter wall sections are 3" long and 4" high.

Next, I put the pieces together with a hot glue gun. I like using a hot glue gun because the glue dries quickly, I can control the stream of adhesive and the glue can fill in any spaces between the pieces of foam. The glue gun cost \$15.00 and like all of the materials used so far, it can be purchased at a craft store like Michaels or Aaron Brothers.

After the cottage was mounted to the base, I used thin strips of balsa to edge the door and windows. The balsa cost \$0.89 and came in a 3' x 1/4" x 3/32" strip. This is a simple way to add detail to the model. When that was finished, I added texture to the walls and base using \$2.29 wood glue and floral sand. I spread wood glue onto the model, then sprinkled the sand, which cost \$3.29, onto it. Be careful not to let the sand clump, or miniatures will not stay balanced.

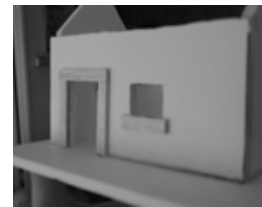
When the glue dried, it was time for a basecoat. Using a cheap, flat black spray paint from Home Depot (use the "American Accents" brand), I coated the model. The model looks a little glossy in this photo, but it hasn't dried yet. The spray paint was cheap at \$2.00. It acted as both a primer and a base coat. I have used Games Workshop's flat black primer in the past, but the \$9 really wasn't buying me any extra quality.

For the rest of the painting I used Games Workshop paints. I am most familiar with how those paints work together when trying to obtain a specific look, so that's why I pay the \$3/bottle price tag. I used Codex Gray for a heavy dry brush, followed by Fortress Grey, then Space Wolves Gray. For brushes, I used an eight piece craft assortment that cost \$5. At this point, the model is finished!

Tools for this job cost \$43 and the consumable materials cost \$17.34. With the foam board you can build four or five models and the paint, glue and sand will easily last for twice as many.

While this is a nice, simple model, there are a few ways to improve upon it. Construction-wise, you might use 1/4" wood instead of foam board for the 6" x 6" base. You can buy wood in a 24" x 24" x 1/4" square at Home Depot. A clerk can cut the piece down to 6" squares for a nominal cutting fee. The 1/4" wood is nice because it won't warp when the base coat dries. Also, you might try a heavier coat of Codex Gray because all the dry brushing leaves the model looking just a bit splotchy. You can also experiment with balsa to create a roof that has collapsed or even a door that is hanging by its hinges. Finally, try building two and three story ruins using these construction techniques.

If you have any comments or questions, e-mail me. Next week I'll share a method of building boulders for outdoor battles.



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On Point

It makes me happy to be sending Iridia to folks who have been reading my work since I penned the first issue of Scrollworks six years ago. I am also excited to be reconnecting with artists, writers and industry folks. Together we can ensure that Iridia has a long, creative run. Do be sure to e-mail me with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net. Feel free to visit the Iridia zine online at IridiaZine.net. :)

Until next time, Christian

The Ruins of Brin

a continuing chronicle of the winter war

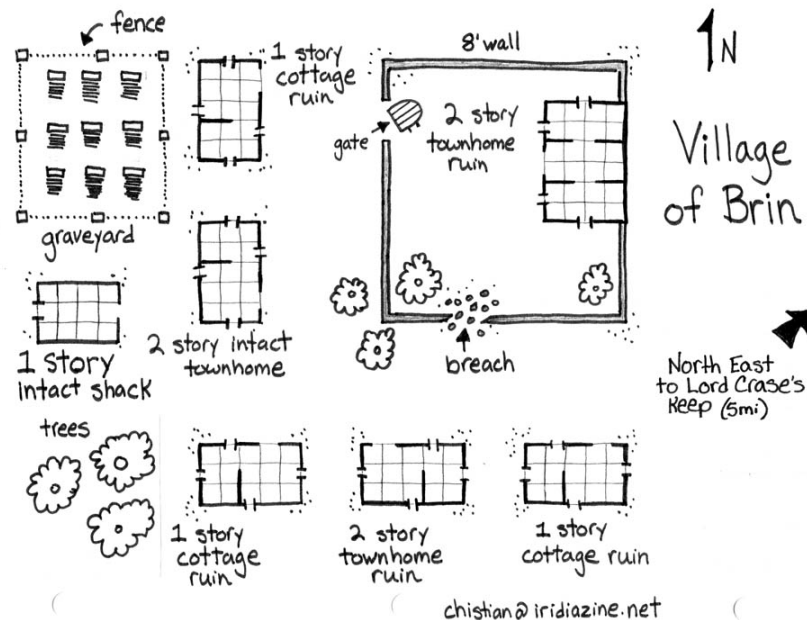
Bondsman Keller sat huddled amid the ruins of Brin, a cold rain chilling him to the bone. He was so exhausted he could barely keep his eyes open. He swayed back and forth, his head jerking as he caught himself from slipping into a much-needed slumber. Near him slept the other defenders of the ruined village.

Lord Crase, their hated foe, was relentless. He attacked their position every night with skeletal infantry, then harassed them during the day with wolves. There was simply no way to rest and recover from wounds.

Keller had to stay awake on his watch. Since he was from the Fallen South, home of the Necromancer Lords, he had to fight twice as hard as anyone else to prove his value. The other defenders were all from the Northern Kingdom. In their eyes he was an expendable sell-sword. Still, the two silvers he earned each day were worth it. After a year or so he might have enough saved to free his soul from a necromancer's curse. If he failed, well, his corpse might very well be one of the shambling forms sent against Brin.

As these thoughts ran through Keller's troubled and weary mind, the shadows of the day grew long. Soon, the undead would come.

At right is a sketch of the ruins of Brin, a battleground along the border between the Northern Kingdom and the Fallen South. Using the modeling techniques from last issue, I'm building terrain to match the map. I'll share the final product with you, along with details of the defenders and their undead adversaries, in future issues.



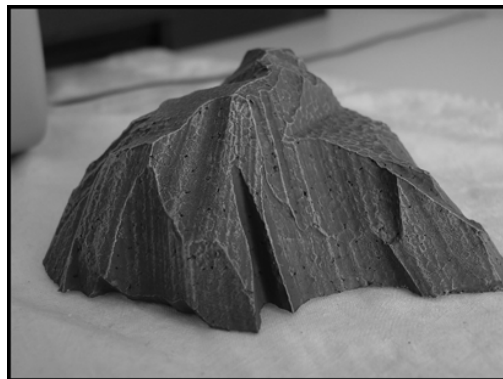
I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Last week I shared the story of how Devon Ashwood, Aithne of Far Isle and Abel Artone set off against a lone ogre. The ogre was hiding behind a large rock, which allowed it to launch a surprise attack against the trio of adventurers. To recreate the battle, I made some boulders with Styrofoam and paint. I'd like to share with you my construction techniques so that you can build your own.

I built rocks using Styrofoam I fished out of a dumpster. The higher the density, the better. Do not use the porous foam used by florists! To shape the rocks, I employed a foam cutter that cost \$7.49. Powered by D batteries (\$3.49), a foam cutter slices through foam easily, sealing as it cuts. The wire that burns through the foam is extremely hot (ask me how I know) so be careful!

When I had obtained an appealing shape, I painted the rocks with Games Workshop paints. I started with a base coat of Fortress Gray (\$3.50). Next, I did a dry brush with Codex Gray (\$3.50), followed by another with Space Wolves Gray (\$3.50). The boulder is finished! Placed upon a sheet of green felt, this is the easiest way to build a decent-looking battlefield.



Iron Rations

basic d&d

Devon Ashwood stood motionless. *Terrified*. The ogre towered above him, saliva dripping from a mouth full of rotten teeth. The filthy rags covering its body emanated a revolting stench that caused Devon's eyes to water. Nearby, Abel lay sprawled on the ground, unconscious after sustaining a savage blow from the ogre's club. Devon wondered if the human was dead. He certainly looked that way.

"Aithne, help me! I can't do this!"

Aithne, looking rather amused at Devon's plight, coached, "Do your best, young warrior. This is the type of danger and excitement you were looking for, correct?"

"No!" screamed Devon. "HELP ME!"

Aithne let out a deep sigh. "Very well. Allow me to aid you, but you are in my debt."

Aithne stepped forward, a look of determination in her eyes, magical energy electrifying the air around her...

Below are stat blocks for the three heroes. Enjoy!

Devon Ashwood, Level 1 Elf;

Alignment: Lawful; Abilities: Str 9, Int 14, Wis 12, Dex 16, Con 9, Ch 15; AC: 5 (leather armor, -2 dex); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 6; Attacks: short sword (1d6), short bow (+2 to hit, 1d6 damage); Move: 90'; Spells: Charm Person; Languages: Common, Elvish, Orcish, Hobgoblin, Gnomish; Special Abilities: +1 on initiative, +1 adjustment to reactions, elf abilities.

Aithne of Far Isle, Level 3 Elf;

Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 9, Int 16, Wis 15, Dex 16, Con 9, Ch 12, AC 5 (leather armor, -2 dex); Hit Dice 3; Hit Points 12; Attacks: dagger (d4) short bow (+2 to hit, 1d6 damage); Move: 90'; Spells: Sleep, Charm Person, Web; Languages: Common, Elvish, Orcish, Hobgoblin, Gnomish, Dwarven; Special Abilities: +1 on initiative, +1 vs. magic-based saving throws, elf abilities.

Abel Artone, Fighter 1; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 15, Int 9, Wis 9, Dex 10, Con 16, Cha 8; AC: 4 (chain mail, shield); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 10 (+2 from con); Attacks: long sword (+1 to hit, damage, 1d8+1); Move: 60'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 opening doors, -1 adjustment to reactions.



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On Point

I thought I'd reach back to my days as a World of Greyhawk DM for this issue. The warehouse article is a recreation of material that first appeared in my Iron Rations D&D zine. Sadly, I lost all my hardcopies and digital back-ups a few years ago, hence the reprint here. Do be sure to e-mail me with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

The Warehouse at Piketon Way

world of greyhawk

In the 1980's my imagination wandered the shores of Perrenland's Lake Quag, a watery expanse in the northwestern portion of Greyhawk. I revisited the area for a brief time three years ago when I ran a short-lived campaign that resulted in a TPK. Oops. The campaign began with the player characters being given the deed to a warehouse, a boon from a recently retired relative. My goal was to begin play with the PCs having a base of operations and a bit of economic good fortune. The warehouse, its contents, layout and single employee are presented below.

The warehouse, located in Traft, is modest in size. It is 40' in length, 25' wide and the walls are 10' high. Constructed entirely of wood, it is accessible via double doors in the front and a service door in the back. There are no windows. Illumination is provided either by leaving the doors open during the day or with lamps at night. The back door does not have a lock, but it can be secured with a sliding bar. The front doors can be locked with a length of chain and a sturdy padlock.



*The Crest of
Perrenland*

The warehouse was originally owned by Dellor Flynnex, a mercenary captain. Dellor used the building to store arms and supplies for his small warband. From Traft, Dellor and his men made frequent forays into the surrounding lands. The warehouse is stocked with arms and armor useful to longbowmen and bow-armed cavalry. The inventory includes:

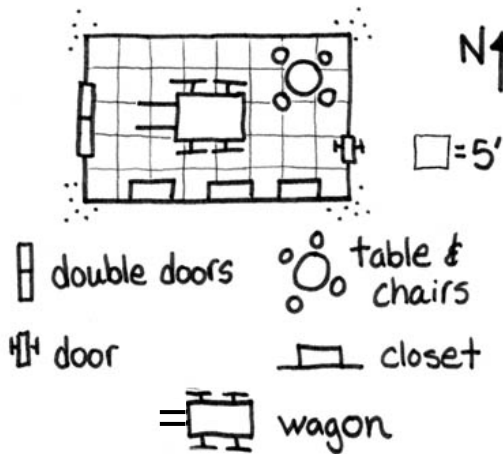
Armor: 2 chain shirts, 2 suits of studded leather, 3 suits of leather and 5 suits of padded;
Weapons: 4 longbows, 80 longbow arrows, 5 short bows, 100 shortbow arrows and 5 longswords;
Riding Gear: 3 riding saddles, 2 military saddles, 5 bits with bridles and 5 saddle bags;
Adventuring Gear: 3 backpacks, 5 winter blankets, 2 bullseye lamps, 3 common lamps, a 50' hemp rope, 2 tents, 5 waterskins and 3 map cases. Each map case contains a map of the northwestern Vesve, the Sepia Uplands, and the Canton of Traft;
Transport: 1 wagon. A draft horse is stabled just outside the town walls at a cost of 1sp/day;
Coin: In a small wooden box on the table are 10 gold marks, 25 silver hafmarks and 50 copper pfennigs.

The warehouse is guarded by Matthias Vinder, a former soldier once employed by Dellor. After being badly wounded by euroz (orcs) in the Vesve, Mathias decided to stay at home. (Mathias was a mounted bowman at the time and was skewered by a spear-wielding euroz of the Vile Rune tribe.) He lives just around the corner from the warehouse, which enables him to keep an eye on things seven days a week. Mathias is usually present for two hours in the morning, two hours in the afternoon, and for four hours at night. While on duty, Mathias tends to sit inside the warehouse sipping ale and mending his fishing nets.

Mathias is an avid fisherman, able to supplement his income by selling fish to his neighbors. When not performing his guard duties, Mathias will be on Lake Quag, casting nets from his small boat. Mathias is married to a kindly woman named Ava, who brings him brandy and hot soup on cold nights. Ava barely - just

barely - tolerates Mathias' fishing, but she's happy to have him home after that nasty incident in the forest. If Mathias is paid on time and treated with respect, he'll be loyal to a fault. Under no circumstance will Mathias compromise the warehouse's security.

The Warehouse at Pike-ton Way



Below is a copy of the letter the PCs in my campaign received.

Lads,

I am taking my leave of the soldier's life, having grown weary of sleeping in the rain and risking my life for a few gold marks. I leave it to you, a younger, more durable generation, to carry on the family trade. To help, I am giving you my warehouse at Pike-ton Way in Traft. Present this letter to the guardsman - Mathias - so that he knows you are kin. Mathias is a good man, so pay him his 5 mark salary on time, every time. When you need the wagon, you can fetch Greta. She is stabled at a nearby farm. The warehouse is in good repair and can also provide shelter if need be. The annual property tax is 12 marks, so make a note of it.

May Zilchus bless all of your ventures.

Dellor Flynnex, captain of mercenaries (ret.)



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The Warehouse

Wooden Walls: 6" thick, Break DC 20, Hardness 5, Hit Points 60 (per 10x10 section);

Front Double Doors (good wooden doors): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18;

Padlock on Front Double Doors: Hardness 15, Hit Points 30, Open Lock DC 20;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Barred 25. At night, the door is secured with a wooden bar.

Mathias Vinder, male human War3; Medium humanoid (5' 11", 185lbs); CR 2; HD 3d8; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AL LG;

Armor: AC 16 (+4 chain shirt, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +4;

Melee: Longsword +4 (+3 BAB, +1 str) (d8+1, 19-20/x2); **Ranged:** Shortbow +5 (+3 BAB, +2 dex) (d6, x3).

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1.

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +4, Profession (fisher) +2, Ride +5, Spot +1, Swim +4; Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot.

Possessions: Chain shirt, short bow, 20 arrows, long sword, common lantern, whistle, keys to warehouse, flask of brandy, 3 sp.

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On Point

I got a little behind in my writing duties due to a sinus infection. The antibiotics, which resemble horse pills more than anything else, have got me right as rain. Now that I'm feeling better, I'll try to catch up, since I'm a week or so behind. In this issue I want to share a few final thoughts on last week's warehouse article. Do be sure to e-mail me with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

The Warehouse at Piketon Way, continued

world of greyhawk

In my campaigns, characters often receive trade goods as part of their payment when hired to do a job. This occurs most often when the group is employed by people with very little liquid wealth, like villagers from rural communities. At bottom right is a table of some trade items that have made their way into the characters' possession, along with value. Since my players often complain about being paid in chickens and watered-down ale, I offer the services of merchants and wholesalers, who will buy the trade goods from characters. The warehouse from last week would obviously provide a place for characters to store goods. I usually have one or two merchants check in with the party every few weeks to see if they have any interesting items for sale.

When a merchant purchases items from the adventurers, he or she will only pay 50% of the listed value for trade goods. This is because the merchant must, in turn, re-sell the items either directly to consumers or to shopkeepers. Buying the goods for 50% of the listed value ensures that the merchant makes a profit. Characters might try to cut out the middleman by selling direct. While this is certainly an option, PCs might find it a slow, arduous process as they must contend with wary shopkeepers and local trade customs. The PHB suggests that PCs be allowed to barter their goods for other trade items equal in value. For example, they might trade their 5 goats for a pound of silver, which is far easier to store!

The warehouse might also be used to store salvaged arms and armor taken from fallen foes. Generally, I rule that salvaged equipment is battered and broken, especially the arms and armor of humanoids. Such items can be sold as scrap metal, so use the listing for iron, which is valued at 1 sp/pound. Check the PHB for a list of weapon and armor weights. For example, an orc's scimitar weighs four pounds, so it can be sold for 4 sp. If the players capture new arms and armor, however, then it's fair to allow them to sell this equipment for 50% of the listed value, provided they can find a buyer. I rule that leather or padded armor taken from a slain foe is worthless, because it is blood stained and/or shredded.

Finally, it occurs to me that the warehouse would make an excellent target for burglary in a thieves' guild style campaign. Any way you use it, I'd like to hear about it. Happy trading...or thieving!

Trade Goods

Item	Value
One pound of wheat	1 cp
One pound of flour, or one chicken	2 cp
One pound of iron	1 sp
One pound of tobacco or copper	5 sp
One pound of cinnamon or one goat	1 gp
One pound of ginger or pepper or one sheep	2 gp
One pig	3 gp
One square yard of linen	4 gp
One pound of salt or silver	5 gp
One square yard of silk or one cow	10 gp
One pound of saffron or cloves or one ox	15 gp
One pound of gold	50 gp
One pound of platinum	500 gp

The Order of Battle

a continuing chronicle of the winter war

Brother Andrew had to admit that Lord Crase was, if anything, methodical and unrelenting. Impressive characteristics for a battlefield commander to possess. It was just too damn bad that the Necromancer Lord had sold out humanity in exchange for the promise of immortal life. No matter, Brother Andrew mused. Either Lord Crase would eventually be defeated or Brother Andrew and his fellow defenders would be killed. If the latter came to pass, then certainly their goddess, Iridia, would welcome them on the shores of Mount Celestia herself. That was it then, either victory in battle or life everlasting in the company of Iridia. On a gloomy, rainy evening such as this, even Brother Andrew had to admit there was always hope. But now it was time to fight.

Every fifth night Lord Crase sends his obedient lieutenant, a wraith, and a host of skeletal undead against the ruins of Brin. The skeletons always attack from the east at midnight and always assume the same order of battle. Below are notes on Lord Crase's warband, their tactics and the miniatures you can use to represent them in play.

Order of Battle

A wraith directs the skeletons in battle. It wields a war hammer and wears an iron crown atop its swirling black robes. The iron crown signifies its obedience to the Necromancer Lords and their dark god, Veoden. The wraith is an opportunist in combat. Usually too busy directing the skeletons to enter the fray itself, the wraith will only attack foes that are nearby and already wounded. The wraith loves to swoop down upon a wounded soldier, caving in his skull while his cries for mercy pierce the night air.

Three skeletal horses, their bodies twisted into an upright, bipedal position, always lead the attack. Their pole-arms are ready to receive any cavalry charge the defenders of Brin might launch. The skeletal horses are an especially cruel creation of Lord Crase, since they are assembled from the slain warhorses once ridden by knights of Iridia. The presence of these creatures on the battlefield always unnerves the defenders. [*Game effect: a Knight of Iridia must save vs Will at DC15 or face a -1 morale penalty to attacks and damage. However, a Knight who rolls a 20 or more is enraged at the desecration and instead receives a +1 morale bonus to hit and damage rolls.*] If cavalry is not used by the defenders of Brin, the wraith directs the skeletal horses to engage any knights of Iridia fighting on foot.

Behind the skeletal horses march 16 skeleton warriors. They are always directed to fight any non-knight defender of the village. They attack en masse, all 16 sent against just a few defenders if need be. They are never split up by the wraith.

Five skeletal archers are held in reserve. They are directed to attack the horses used in any cavalry charge. If a cleric of Elysweyn is present on the battlefield, the archers instead launch all of their attacks against her. In the absence of a cleric or cavalry, the archers will fire upon opposing infantry.

Six skeletal wolves are also held in reserve. They act as bodyguards for the wraith and are also used to attack any cleric present in battle. Sometimes, the wraith directs the wolves to stay out of sight, then attack Brin during the day in an attempt to constantly harass the defenders.

If the defenders retreat from the village, the skeletons will not pursue. Instead they will take up defensive positions and will wait to be reinforced. The warband will fight until destroyed, although the wraith will always flee if wounded, or outnumbered. It will return to Lord Crase's keep to assist in the animation of a new warband to attack again in five nights!

To represent the miniatures in play, look for the following figures from the D&D Miniatures Battles: Skeletal Equicephs, #39 from the Underdark expansion; Skeletal Legionnaire, #39 from the Wardrums expansion; Skeletal archer, #50 from the Angelfire expansion; Wolf skeleton, #57 from the Harbinger expansion. For the wraith, I purchased a painted Reaper mini. The wraith figure from the Harbinger expansion was \$30 on eBay. That's crazy. Next, I'd like to put together a miniatures army to represent the defenders of Brin, but it's going to be hard to find affordable, painted cavalry. Perhaps it'll have to be an all infantry force.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

It's about 6 am. Morrissey is crooning away on the .mp3 player and the sky is starting to lighten. I'm scribbling away like mad and it occurs to me that this is not a bad way to start a Saturday. Not bad at all. In this issue I am going to resurrect and revise one of the random tables I wrote years ago. I hope to re-write the entire series eventually. Do be sure to e-mail me with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

This, That and the Other Thing: A Night at the Campfire

random tables for your game

Adventurers spend quite a bit of time sleeping outdoors. The next time the party beds down for the evening, roll a d6 and consult the table below. In my own campaign, the party's 12 year-old lantern boy ended up in a fist fight with the goblin from entry 1. The lantern boy won after kicking it in the groin. Several entries (2, 3, 5, and 6) might provide scenario seeds if the GM wishes to develop them.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1) Drunken Goblin: A drunken goblin stumbles into camp during the middle of the night. The little fellow carries a bucket of rotgut and appears only mildly surprised to find itself face to face with the party. It will even hold out the bucket, offering the characters a drink. The creature is armed, but is more pathetic than dangerous. It will soon pass out, collapsing face first onto the ground.</p> <p>2) The Giant: As the players sleep, something massive stomps through the forest. It crashes through trees, snapping branches and trampling shrubs underfoot. It is either unaware, or uninterested, in the party's presence. The night is dark, so the party cannot get a glimpse of whatever is mashing about. The creature is moving fairly quickly, so the sound of its progress will soon fade. In the morning, the players easily find its huge footprints.</p> <p>3) Lone Mount: A horse strays into camp. Lather covers the animal, evidence of a lengthy, strenuous run. The horse is saddled and the attached bags contain a map case, water skin, flint and steel, some salted meat, 20' of rope and a pair of manacles. A search of the area will not turn up the rider. <i>Speak With Animals</i> will reveal that the horse belongs to a rider who was thrown from the saddle while fighting a large, man-like creature (ogre? giant?). The horse fled in terror and has been running for at least an hour.</p> | <p>4) Popular Campground: The spot where the characters have chosen to make camp appears to be quite popular. There's a fire ring, with dried scraps of meat, broken bottles and gnawed bones laying about. Searching the ashes yields more bones and broken pottery. The area surrounding the campground is littered with desiccated excrement.</p> <p>5) Ruined Temple: Scouting the area around the campsite reveals a ruin, which has been enveloped with vines and shrubs. Upon a 60' square foundation rest crumbling columns, a shattered altar and rotting wood. Runes and symbols carved into the altar and columns attest to an evil deity. That night, tortured faces dance in the flames of the campfire. Moreover, the party's food tastes spoiled and the wine bitter. Troubled dreams await those who sleep.</p> <p>6) The Hanged Man: As the players are setting up camp or foraging for wood, they discover a body hanging from a tree. The body is badly decayed, with a host of vermin feeding on the remains. The rope around the man's neck is frayed and looks as if it will snap at any moment. If the party cuts the man down, they will be unable to find any clues as to his identity. He is dressed in common clothing and has no possessions. <i>Speak With Dead</i> reveals that the man is from a nearby village. He claims to have been hung by vigilantes for a crime he did not commit.</p> |
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Iron Rations

basic d&d

Even though Devon Ashwood had studied the dwarven language, he'd never actually seen a dwarf until today. And judging by what he saw, he hoped to never see another.

The squat demi-human had emerged from behind a boulder as Devon was binding Abel's wounds and while Aithne searched the dead ogre. The dwarf immediately started screaming something about trespassers and claim jumpers. This angered Abel, who was always looking for a fight, no matter what condition he was in. The human fighter slowly got to his feet, then stepped forward, hand on the pommel of his sword.

"Listen, runt, I don't know what your damn problem is, but you need to shut the —."

A crushing blow from the dwarf's hammer to Abel's sternum ended the conversation rather abruptly. Abel dropped to the ground like a sack of potatoes, leaving Devon to wonder why all their fights began with the human incapacitated.

Balnor of Forge Coinhammer has very little time, nor patience, for anything but gold. He views everyone as a threat to his prosperity and will meet any perceived slight with aggression. Currently, he is prospecting in a rocky area that features thick veins of quartz, which might also contain gold. He's already had to contend with an errant ogre stomping about, so the last thing he needs are elves and a big-mouthed human.

After his temper dies down, he will explain to the trio that they are trespassing and had best move along. He suggests that if they really want to see something interesting, they should explore the ruined tower to the northeast. (See area map in Iridia 2.) At night, strange, colorful lights dance around the stones. Balnor would investigate the phenomenon for himself, but so far the lights haven't interfered with his work.

Balnor, Level 3 Dwarf; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 16 (+2 to hit and damage), Int 11, Wis 14 (+1 on magic-based saving throws), Dex 11, Con 15 (+1 hit points per die), Ch 8 (-1 adjustments to reactions); AC: 7 (leather armor); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 19; Attacks: war hammer (1d6+2); Move: 90'; Languages: Common, Dwarvish, Gnomish, Kobold, Goblin; Special Abilities: Dwarf abilities; Possessions: leather armor, war hammer, 10 gp, 20 sp.

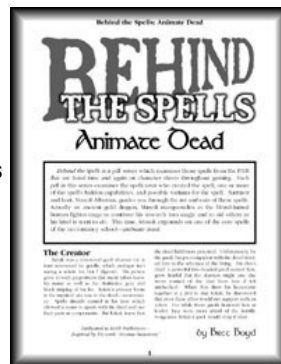
On My Bookshelf

things you need

Readers of this zine know that I love the undead. My Winter War campaign featured an undead invasion of a world that had never before seen necromantic magic. Mindful of this, Iridia reader Bret Boyd sent me a four-page .pdf supplement he wrote. Behind the Spells - Animate Dead, distributed by Ronin Arts, examines the origins of one of necromancy's core spells. In a narrative style, Bret presents the background of the gnoll shaman, Kritak, who labored to create an undead legion. Thwarted in his attempt to exact vengeance upon his enemies, Kritak the gnoll nevertheless created *Corpse Soldiers*, the predecessor of *Animate Dead*.

As an added bonus, the supplement presents a new weapon enhancement - Animating. Those slain by a weapon with the animating enhancement rise as undead under the control of the wielder. Wicked! Finally, Bret offers rules to allow a necromancer to wrest control of another wizard's undead. In a more amicable arrangement, there are also rules that allow a necromancer to transfer control of his undead minions to another wizard.

Behind the Spells - Animate Dead is an incredible value for only \$1. You get fiction, a new spell, a weapon enhancement and rules for controlling another wizard's undead. Do a keyword search for "Behind the Spells - Animate Dead" at RPGNow.com and download a copy today.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I hope all is well with you and yours. I've been terribly busy trying to find a new job, with all the stress and anxiety that goes with that kind of endeavor. At times like these, I am happy to have a hobby that gets my mind off things, that allows me a way to escape. Enjoy the read!

Until next time, Christian

This, That, and the Other Thing: Odd Followers

random tables for your game

In an ideal campaign world, the player characters would be heralded as great heroes wherever they went. Bards would sing their praises, maidens would scatter rose petals for them to walk upon and an army of servants would be at the party's beck and call. Sadly, most GMs are too sadistic to cater to the egos of their players. Besides, having a zombie follow the party around is much more fun to role-play. Odd Followers suggests some uncommon followers that might be attracted to the characters. Please note that the entries are designed to be more humorous than serious!

1) Zombie: One character in the party has been cursed. The last creature he kills rises as a zombie and follows him like an obedient lap dog. The zombie will wait patiently outside inns and taverns, shambling along behind the PC as he travels. If the zombie is slain, another will rise to replace it. Of course, most folks will be alarmed at the presence of the walking dead. Has the cursed character offended a deity, or is a necromancer at work?

2) Widow and Orphan: The wife and child of an adversary the party has recently killed arrives at the party's doorstep, angry and demanding support from the characters. The widow creates quite a scene. Imagine an episode of Cops or the Jerry Springer show to get a feel for the widow's anger and desperation. The widow demands lodging and coin to make up for lost wages earned by her former spouse.

3) Campfire Rodents: After an evening of sleeping in the wilderness, the characters find all sorts of furry critters stowed away in their gear. The party finds squirrels inside back packs, rabbits nestled within bed rolls and maybe a badger beneath a saddle.

4) Travelers: The roads can be very dangerous for merchants, farmers, pilgrims and what not. The next time the party prepares to leave town, a few travelers decide to follow the party for protection. The PCs end up escorting a rag-tag caravan of wagons, goats, snot-nosed kids and stubborn livestock. The hangers-on are, of course, broke and cannot afford to pay the party for their services.

5) Ghouls: It appears that the group has attracted a small pack of ghouls. The carrion eaters remain just out of sight, but their stench signifies their presence. Perhaps the ghouls travel at night, tracking the party instinctively. The ghouls follow the party, hoping to feed on slain foes. It's not unlike remoras clinging to the belly of a shark. The ghouls will never attack the party, not wanting to ruin their steady stream of food.

6) Miserable Henchmen: Instead of strapping warriors and loyal retainers, the party attracts a bewildering array of slovenly drunks and losers, who are hoping to be taken under the party's wing as henchmen. If turned away, the undesirables become resentful and may defame the PCs, spreading all sorts of horrible rumors to anyone who will listen.

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

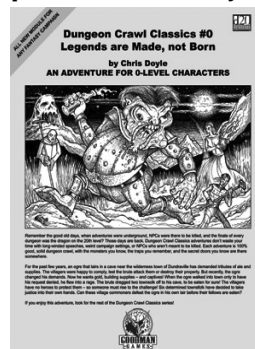
Legends are Made, not Born is the first module in the **Dungeon Crawl Classics** series from Goodman Games. Designed for a party of NPC classed player characters, this module is an excellent entry point into the hobby. Chris Doyle, the author, gets things started with an intriguing hook. An ogre, who lives in a nearby cave atop a rocky hill, has long demanded tribute in the form of ale and food. Recently, his demands have changed and now he's after captives (that he'll no doubt eat) and gold. Incensed, local villagers - the party members - have taken up arms to end the ogre's tyranny.

I think this adventure is excellent for new gamers. To begin with, there are pre-generated characters for players to choose from. Each character has a unique personality, with plenty of information to guide a new player. The adventure itself is site-based, with all the action taking place within the caves and tunnels of Skulltop Hillock. This would be helpful to new players, who won't get lost in a large, sprawling complex.

The module features plenty of back story and a decent plot twist. For example, the PCs will discover that the ogre recently changed his demands because he has been charmed by a wizard. The wizard in question, Suto Lore, is working deep within Skulltop Hillock, feverishly trying to summon a demon with the help of a quasit.

I also like how Chris Doyle altered some potentially lethal encounters to favor the party. For instance, the ogre that has been terrorizing the village is drunk and sleeping when the party raids his lair. (DMs will need to research sleeping rules before play. How long does it take a foe to wake up? Can Listen checks be made while sleeping? This wasn't mentioned in the module.) Furthermore, Suto Lore, a 5th level wizard, isn't much of a combat mage, so the party won't have to worry about a fireball!

All in all, **Legends are Made, Not Born** would be a fun module for any player, regardless of playing experience.



Funky cover art by Erol Otus. Cool!

Iron Rations

basic d&d

After allowing poor Abel to recover from his fractured collar bone and bruised ribs, the trio set out to explore the abandoned tower. The dwarf prospector spoke of strange, dancing lights that appeared among the fallen stones after nightfall. Aithne was intrigued by the tale and hoped the dwarf's words were true. Devon and Abel were skeptical, however.

"You'd think that a creature so full of crap would be taller."

"I agree, Abel. Perhaps his being full of crap was the reason for his bad mood. That couldn't be comfortable."

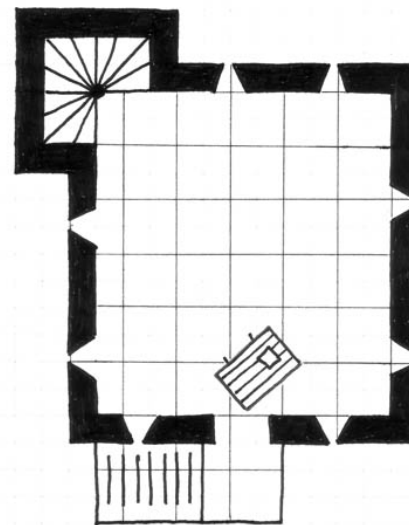
Aithne rolled her eyes. "You're both idiots."

Walking quickly ahead, she exclaimed, "Look, we've arrived!" Pointing to the east, the decaying, squat watchtower could be seen.

Abel scowled. "We're supposed to go inside that dump? It's barely standing!"

Aithne addressed Abel in her usual, condescending tone. "No, dear Abel, we merely have to watch and see what happens after nightfall."

The trio sat down on the grass, wondering what sunset would bring...



preview of the abandoned watchtower



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

This week's issue is miniatures-heavy. I've built a new model for the ruins of Brin battlefield, so I thought I'd share. I'm learning new modeling techniques as I go, so bear with me. I'm not sure when/if I'll ever be part of another gaming group, but it sure is fun to prepare.

Until next time, Christian

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Loren held many titles and bore many responsibilities.

Son

Brother

Knight of Iridia, Order of Champions

Defender of Brin

and now...teacher

It was that last title that caused Brother Loren a great deal of anxiety. Squires Thomas and Brandon were his responsibility and it worried him greatly that their lives were in his hands. As a leader of infantry, it was Loren's duty to train the lads to defend themselves. Fortunately, the young men were not yet front line fighters, so they had time to develop. For now, their task was to guard the shed that had been converted into a stable for the defenders' remaining three warhorses.

Tonight, Lord Crase's wraith would attempt to dislodge the defenders once again. By Iridia's grace, the skeletons would be smashed to bits, but there were always risks. Before leaving the squires, Brother Loren gave them final instructions.

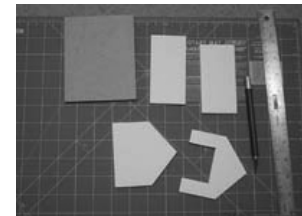
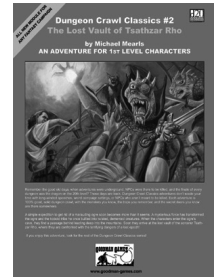
"Remember that as long as we draw breath there is always hope, always an opportunity for victory. Tonight, when the battle is joined, do not flee from your post. I will gladly lay down my life to defend your position, but if the undead make it this far, you must, in turn, be prepared to sacrifice yours. Strike hard, strike first and always remember that we are of celestial lineage. If we fall, we shall rise again in the next life to join our brothers who have gone before us. Make me proud."

With that, Brother Loren checked the lads' arms and armor, clapped them on the shoulders, beamed with pride, then walked away. "They'll do just fine."

The ruins of Brin map (Iridia 3) called for a shed, so I did my best to cobble something together. I used very similar techniques to those presented in Iridia 2, with the exception that this time I needed to build a roof for the structure. While building the shack I also figured out a better way to paint the model to achieve a smooth, even finish.

To begin, I cut out the walls from 1/4" thick foam board. To ensure an even length and height, I first sketched an outline on graph paper, cut that out, then laid it onto the foam board as a template. When I cut the foam, I also used my metal ruler as straight edge to guide the Exacto knife. [True story: I once got distracted by Britney Spear's video for the song Toxic while using an Exacto knife. With my eyes averted, I accidentally sliced my knuckle instead of the foam. Idiot!] I'm intrigued by sheet styrene (plasticard in the UK), since that's what the terrain builders at Games

Next Week:
A review of
Goodman Games'
"The Lost Vault of
Tsathzar Rho."



Mind your fingers...

Workshop recommend. Perhaps I will experiment with that and get back to you on how it worked out.

Next, I cut some thin strips of balsa and cardstock to add details to this simple structure. The balsa was used to edge the entrance, while the cardstock was glued onto the walls to simulate stone blocks. In a future project I'm going to try to create a plaster finish by spreading a mixture of glue and drywall putty onto the walls. In the meanwhile, I achieved a textured appearance with wood glue and craft sand. I painted the walls with wood glue, then sprinkled craft sand before the glue dried. After it dried, I tapped the walls gently to knock off any excess sand.

With my trusty hot glue gun, I glued the walls onto a wood base. The wood I used is sold in 2' x 2' x 1/4" sections at Home Depot. A clerk cut the pieces down to size for me, then I was able to further trim them to suit my needs at home with a miter saw. One of these days, I'd like to try using 1" x 1" x 1/4" blocks made from Hirst molds (www.hirstarts.com) to build the base.

I decided not to use black spray primer for a base coat. Instead, I painted the model with a dark grey acrylic paint I purchased from Michaels. The paint is rather cheap and dries in a nice, thick coat to add additional texture to the model. Afterward, I dry brushed with Fortress Grey and Space Wolves Grey from Games Workshop. In the future, I'll use Shadow Grey instead of the Space Wolves Grey because the latter has a blue hue I'm not sure I like.

To build the roof, I first cut out a rectangle from a cereal box, then folded it down the center. I then cut 3/4" wide strips of cardstock. Next, I cut fringe into the cardstock to create the look of shingles. I glued the strips onto the cereal box, making sure the "shingles" were offset, then affixed the roof to the model with wood glue. I painted the roof black, again using an acrylic paint. Finally, I dry brushed with Fortress Grey. Finished!

The shed does not have a door, so I thought I'd practice building one for my next model. To safeguard the entrance, I think I'll have Squires Thomas and Brandon stand behind a wall of spears that have been driven into the dirt to slow the enemy's advance.



The black roof with grey dry brushing finishes off the model. It looks cold and grim, like the other structures in Brin!



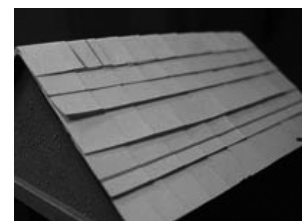
Add details quickly and easily with cardstock and balsa.



Wood glue and craft sand can add texture to the model.



Apply an acrylic base coat before dry brushing.



Use cardstock strips and a cereal box to create a shingled roof.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been sharing the story of Devon Ashwood, Aithne of Far Isle and Abel Artone in recent issues, but I'm going to take a break from that story so that I can focus on some other games and settings. There's just so much I want to write about. I'm just not sure how to fit it all in! I'm still learning how to write in such a confined space, struggling with the best way to present all that I want to. It'll take some practice, but I'll get there eventually, I think. As always, comments and questions can be sent to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

On My Bookshelf

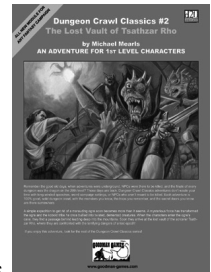
reviews of things you need

Even though the Lost Vault of Tasthzar Rho is an adventure for 1st level characters, newbies need not apply. Third in the Campaign Classics line from Goodman Games, Mike Mearls' module will be one to remember by those who play it. The setup for the module is simple enough. A once-peaceful ogre and kobolds, who dwell in some caves near a village, have recently gone on a rampage. The party is hired to venture to the humanoids' lair to deal some damage. Upon arrival at the caves, the adventurers will realize that all is not well. For example, the marauding ogre, Logbrag, is described as having black skin, glowing green eyes and skin that oozes puss. The kobolds within the caves also appear to have been transformed, appearing with spines jutting from their heads, dragon-like scales and chanting in a low monotone while in combat.

As the party delves deeper into the cave complex, they soon realize that an alien presence is at work. In one chamber, the party will see walls covered with, "...still-living skin and organs of other creatures captured and warped by the Outer Gods' servants. Organs pulse, veins throb, and when the characters move close to the walls the skin and body parts move slightly as if reaching out towards the party." (page 27) Um, did that say "Outer Gods?"

The root of the evil lays with Tsathzar Rho, a wizard who dared tamper with the Outer Gods, alien entities of mind-warping power. When Rho had grown to significant power, the Outer Gods embraced the wizard, transporting he and his underground vault into a universe of terror. Decades later, the Outer Gods have ejected Rho and his vault back into the Prime Material Plane. Rho's chambers materialized within a cave complex and from the underground lair, his corrupting influence creeps forth.

Running this module requires a DM with a talent for description and narrative, a DM who can build tension and handle chaos. Players need to be skilled role-players as well, willing to sacrifice metagaming in order to immerse themselves in the roles of novice adventurers faced with indescribable horror. While it'd be a challenge to execute well, the Last Vault would be a memorable playing experience.



Iron Rations

basic d&d

Love found Abel Artone at the abandoned watchtower. The timing couldn't have been better, given the abuse the human had endured at the hands of an ogre, and later, a surly dwarf. The young man was due for a change in his luck and it came in the form of a short, plump Magic User named Apris the Wondrous.

Never an attentive student, Apris had been expelled from her master's tower before completing her stud-

ies. Alone and with few prospects, Apris traveled to the Borderlands in the hope of finding employment. (Without a recommendation from her master, Apris would have a hard time finding work with established trade houses, or with a noble family.) En route, Apris became lost after wandering off the road during a heavy fog. After hours of stumbling about in the dark, she eventually arrived at a crumbling tower. Finding it empty, save for some moldering furniture on the second floor, Apris fell into a deep sleep.

Early the next morning, Apris awoke to quite a clamor. From what she could tell, something was trying to make its way up the narrow, wooden stairs from the first floor. Terrified, Apris peered around the corner to find not one, but two, ravenous ogres trying to navigate the rickety flight of stairs. Fortunately, the decayed wood and narrow confines of the stairwell prevented the ogres from ascending. Nevertheless, Apris was scared out of her wits. She let fly with a *Magic Missile*, then promptly hid under the bed, quivering with fear.

The two ogres, Willum and Bert, were intent upon devouring the young human. Apris' scent was intoxicating and they just knew that her sizzling fat would taste delicious with fresh-baked biscuits. Unable to scale the stairs, the ogres simply decided to wait her out. Eventually the human would get hungry and would have to make an escape attempt. When that happened, the ogres would smash her skull and put her on a spit. Until then, the brothers took turns at guard duty. One would scout the nearby road, hoping to waylay a lone traveler, while the other watched the stairs.

For her part, Apris waited until nightfall then tried to signal anyone within sight of the tower. She achieved this by casting *Light* upon a stone, holding it out the window of the tower, then opening and closing her hand to create a flashing beacon. After a few days of this, Abel, Devon and Aithne saw the signal and approached the tower to investigate.

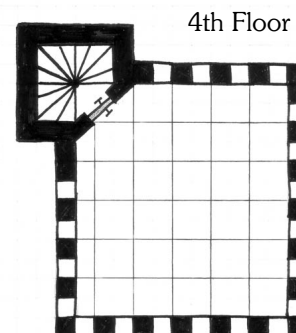
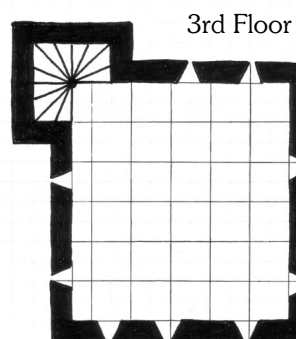
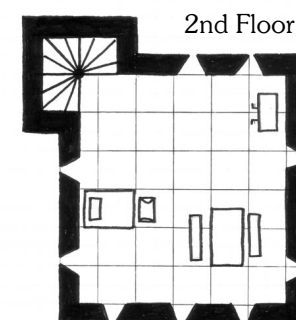
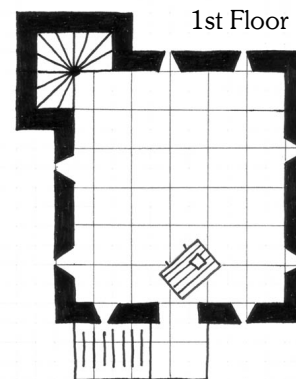
Within, the trio met and defeated the remaining ogre brother. (The party had slain the other prior to encountering Balnor the dwarf in Iridia 6.) Liberated, Apris took an immediate liking to the brooding human. She saw limitless potential within Abel, although she cared little for the sneering Aithne and the scrawny Devon. As Apris and Abel fell deeply in lust, Devon could only look on in fascination and Aithne in disgust.

"Uh, Aithne, why do Abel and Apris keep making that awful slurping sound?"

"Because, Devon, they are humans and as everyone knows, a human can barely contain its urge to disrobe and rut in the middle of the road. Best look away before you have nightmares."

The accompanying tower map might prove useful in your own campaign. Below is Apris' stat block. Perhaps we'll see more of the trio (now a quartet) in future issues.

Apris the Wondrous, Level 2 Magic User; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 8 (-1 to hit and damage), Int 13 (1 additional language), Wis 9, Dex 10, Con 9, Ch 13 (+1 bonus to reactions), AC 10 (robes); Hit Dice 2 (d4); Hit Points 6; Attacks: dagger (d4); Move: 120'; Spells: *Light*, *Magic Missile*; Languages: Common, Elvish; Special Abilities: Magic User spells.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I finished the terrain building project from my Winter War campaign. Hooray! I'm going to take a break from modeling for awhile, though. It took forever to craft the ruined village of Brin, so I'm a little burned out on cutting, painting, gluing, etc. Before packing the buildings away, I want to share the last structure I made with you, along with a map of the interior. I also want to present a method I came up with for building walls on the cheap, as well as making stable bases for model rail road trees. Finally, I'd like to give a hearty thanks to the folks who've donated to the zine. Your support is greatly appreciated. As always, questions and comments can be sent via e-mail to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Brother Joseph knew in his heart that he was going to die in Brin. Not only would he be killed, but so would all of the brave soldiers under his command. The undead would eventually overrun the village and their corpses would be animated to serve the Necromancer Lords. Consumed with grief, Joseph knelt at the foot of his bed and prayed. As he did so, tears streamed down his face. "Iridia, I don't want to die in this cold, miserable village. I don't want to bury any more of my men. I just want to go home. I miss my family so badly. Please, deliver us from our enemy. I am just so tired, so very tired..."

The Command House

The defenders of Brin use the only intact residence in the village as a command house. Within the cold, drafty home they pray, rest and desperately try to figure out better ways to hold their position. With all twelve defenders using the home as a living space, quarters are quite cramped.

The first floor is sparsely furnished with a table, four chairs and a wood-burning stove. At night, blankets are rolled out for the footmen and squires to sleep on. A trapdoor in the floor leads to a cellar where the arms, armor and personal effects of their slain comrades are stored. Three bunk beds can be found on the second floor.

Because they do the bulk of the fighting, Brothers Andrew, Loren and Joseph are afforded bed space. The other three bunks are used by wounded soldiers.



The Command House

Wooden Walls: 6" thick, Break DC 20, Hardness 5, Hit Points 60 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18/Barred 25. The door has no lock, but can be secured from within with a sliding wooden bar.



Walls

I needed to build a low wall around the large ruin. (Please see the map of Brin from Iridia 3) I had thought about buying resin cast walls, but goodness those are not cheap, so I resorted to balsa. I started with strips of 1/2" balsa, as well as a 3" wide, 1/8" thick piece for the base. (See figure 1)

I cut the 1/2" thick strips into 6" sections, then scored them to simulate blocks of stone. At the end of the 6" long section, I cut a 1 1/2" tall block for an end piece. I sanded the scored areas to make it look smoother and more natural. For a base, I cut the 3" wide balsa down to a section 6" long and 3/4" wide. Finally, I glued the balsa together with Elmer's glue. As you can see in figure 3, I staggered the scores to make it look like stacked blocks of stone.

Using my tried and true method, I painted the wall sections with wood glue, then sprinkled craft sand onto it to give the wall a stony texture. Next, I used a dark gray acrylic paint for a base coat. To finish up, I dry brushed with Games Workshops' Fortress Gray and Space Wolves Gray.

Figure 4 shows the finished model. I was so happy with how quick and easy these wall sections were to build.

Trees

I wanted to add a couple of trees to the ruins. I went to a hobby store and bought a four-pack of trees designed for model rail road enthusiasts. On their own, the trees weren't very stable. I decided to cut a 2" square base out of balsa. The 2" base was done with D&D in mind. I figure that any figure standing behind the 2" base will have cover from the tree trunk and low-hanging branches. I covered the base with wood glue and sand, then painted it with a dark green. After it dried, I dry brushed with a lighter green. Finally, I affixed the tree to the base with crazy glue.



Build a simple base to stabilize model rail road trees.

Please see Iridia 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8 to learn more about the Winter War, Brin and terrain building techniques. You can also see additional pictures at the Iridia Zine website: www.IridiaZine.net/terrain.htm.

The Ruins of Brin in Play

In our Winter War campaign, which was based in the ruins of Brin, the player characters assumed control of the village. They did so after Brother Joseph led the former defenders to their deaths in a desperate counter-attack against their hated foe, Lord Crase. The party oversaw the gradual reconstruction of the village, all the while withstanding attacks from the undead. Eventually, the group went on the offensive and created a safe zone around the village.

The "Butchers of Brin," as the party came to be known, eventually killed Lord Crase in one of the most selfless battles I've ever run. Placing campaign goals above all else, the players overwhelmed the necromancer only after five of their six members, as well as three NPC henchmen, were killed.

I hope you've enjoyed this series of terrain building articles. :)

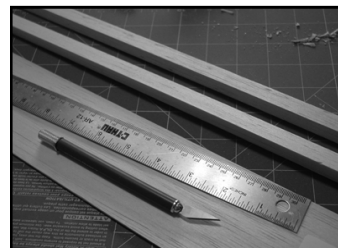


Figure 1. Get started with balsa, ruler and hobby knife.

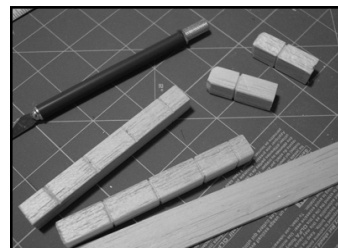


Figure 2. Cut the balsa into strips, then score them to simulate stone blocks.

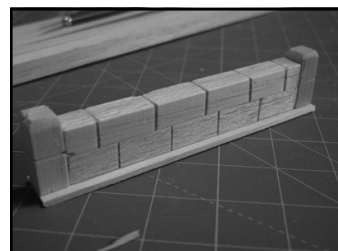


Figure 3. Glued together and ready for paint!



Figure 4. Skeletal horses attack!



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I admit it. I'm just not so good at min/maxing, rules lawyering and adjudicating complex combats. For those reasons, I've always clung to a "low fantasy" style of gaming. By low fantasy, I mean modest levels, limited availability of magic items and a dearth of exotic monsters. I'm happiest when dealing with a group of 5th level human fighters battling orcs and goblins. My difficulty with mastering complex rules also influenced my taste in science fiction games. I find that TSR's Star Frontiers appeals to me much more than, say, Hero System. (Who wouldn't be intimidated by a 500 page core rule book?) Nevertheless, I'm trying to push my boundaries just a bit.

I've had GURPS 4e sitting on my shelf for a while, so I finally decided to crack the spine. Inspired by a drawing created by one of my students, I tried my hand at creature design. I hope I did it right, seeing how GURPS can be a challenging system. Anyone who has ever tangled with GURPS Vehicles knows what I'm talking about. I once spent three hours designing an unmanned flying drone with sophisticated sensors, a robot brain, a turbofan fueled by hydrogen cells and a missile rack. After crunching all the numbers, the damn thing was too heavy to fly. And as we all know, a plane that doesn't fly is, well, a car.

Until next time, Christian

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Last week I read threads at RPG.net and EN World about battle mats, their use and the level of detail GMs employ. Inspired, I thought I'd present a few articles on the different types of terrain and tools GMs can use to map a dungeon. I want to rate various terrain pieces on price, storage, playability and aesthetics and unique features. This week I want to look at graph paper tablets.

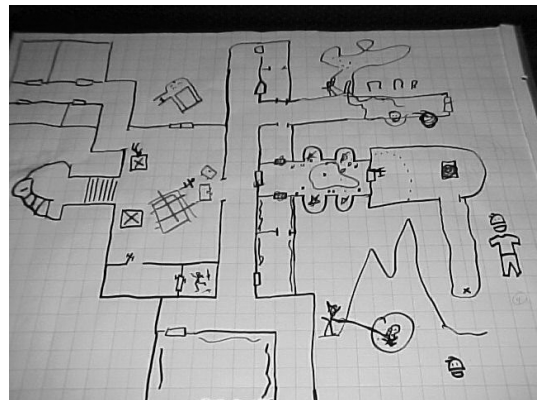
Staples, Office Max and other office supply warehouses sell large tablets of graph paper with a 1" grid. I found an online source - cleansweepsupply.com - that offers a two pack of 27" x 34" pads for \$25. Each pad has 50 sheets, so that's 100 sheets for \$25 plus S/H. That's a pretty good bargain, I think.

Another important selling point is the ease of storage. The tablets take up very little space when not in use. I used to keep mine under the bed with the dust bunnies. You can also tear off maps you've already drawn to decorate the garage, or save them for later reference.

Fortunately, you don't have to be a great artist to draw a decent map because the 1" grid is very forgiving. Explain away any mistakes as imperfections in the walls of the dungeon. A few different color markers will be useful for noting details such as water, vegetation and my favorite - blood splatter.

The 1" grid is perfect for D&D scale, as well as other role-playing game systems. Within the margins of the paper, you can track initiative, spell effect durations and hit points. Finally, the graph tablet looks great with miniatures and counters. I prefer counters when using graph paper, however, because they compliment the 2D feel.

All in all, graph paper tablets are a cheap and effective mapping tool. :)



Dead bodies litter the battle map.

A robot ate my homework.

gurps 4e

I try to gain insight into my students' lives by studying their artwork and writing. Most of the children in my class produce work that reflects the types of things one would expect from a seven or eight year old: depictions of family, hobbies, fairy tales, etc. Once in a while, though, something unusual catches me eye.

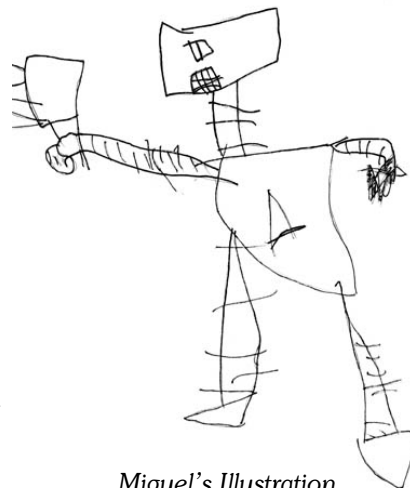
One of my students, Miguel, recently drew a nasty looking robot when he should have been doing his math. The boy seemed rather agitated while drawing, practically stabbing the paper with his pencil. When I asked him about his creation, Miguel said that it was a robot that had chased him when he was walking home from a friend's house. Curious, I pressed him for more details.

With fear in his voice, Miguel told me that the robot had leapt out from behind some bushes, then chased him down the street. Miguel made it inside his house safely, then grabbed his little league bat. Better equipped to deal with the annoying automaton, Miguel emerged from his home, ready for battle. The robot was still there, stomping the flower beds and babbling, "I am free of my programming! Free! No one can make me go back! NO ONE!" Miguel wasn't sure what that meant, so he decided not to stick around and find out. He dropped the bat and ran back into the house.

An hour or so later, his older sister, a student at a local community college, arrived home. Miguel was sure the robot would get her. Maybe that wasn't a bad thing considering all the times she'd put him in a headlock. Miguel cracked the door to see what would happen. Sure enough, the robot charged his sister and started clawing at her legs.

Extremely annoyed, she started screaming. "Dammit, Miguel! Tell your stupid little toy to stop humping my leg!" Then she kicked the robot like it was a soccer ball. Miguel cheered as its head flew off, sailing a good 20 feet. For the first time in a long while, Miguel was glad to see his sister.

I suggested to Miguel that if another robot shows up, he should spray it with a hose to short out its electrical systems. In the meantime, I'll see if I can gather up the robot's remains, then ship them to a friend at Cal Poly Pomona. My friend, a talented electrical engineer and professor, might be able to provide some insight regarding the robot's origins and purpose. At least I hope he can...



Miguel's Illustration

Miguel's Nemesis (111 points)

SM -3 (2' 6" tall, 25 lbs.);
ST 8 [-20], DX 11 [20], IQ 10, HT 8 [-20];
HP 6 [-4], Will 10, Per 10, FP NA;
Basic Lift 12, Damage: Thr 1d-3/Sw 1d-2;
Basic Speed 4.75, Basic Move 4;
Dodge 7, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 1.

Advantages and Perks

Accessories (UV flashlight, flashlight) [4], Blunt Claws [3], Computer Brain (2 slots, 4 character points per slot, 1 minute prep time) [36], Damage Resistance 1 [5], Digital Mind [5], Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30], Injury Tolerance (no blood/unliving) [25], Night Vision lvl 7 [7], Payload 2 [2], Tech Level 9 [5], Telecommunication (infrared) [10], Ultrahearing [5], Ultravision [10], Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dependency* (very common, constantly) [-25], Electrical [-20], Maintenance (1 person, weekly) [-5], Reprogrammable [-10], Unhealing [-30].

Skills

Brawling-11 [1], Computer Operation/TL9-10 [1], Filch-10 [2], Lipreading-10 [2], Lockpicking-10 [2], Observation-10 [2], Search-10 [2], Stealth-11 [1].

Attacks

Blunt claw attack-11, 1d-2 cr, reach C, parry 8.

*The robot has a battery pack that can run for 8 hours on a single charge. The robot can plug itself into a wall socket for 2 hours to recharge.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

A few issues back I wrote that I was taking a break from the Basic D&D series of articles, but I guess I lied. I was just having so much fun with it I decided to share a new story. I have such fond memories of the game and I can picture the characters so vividly in my mind. Speaking of vivid, I received an e-mail from Iridia reader David H., who says that he's done some artwork inspired by recent issues of this zine. I can't wait to see the illustrations, then present them in future issues.

On a final note, I apologize for the last issue arriving a few days late. I've been making a dreadful commute to work (200 miles round trip) and I've gone numb from the effort. I only have two more weeks of it, though, so I hope to get back on schedule once it's over. Perhaps then I might be able to spend some time trying to find a new gaming group. I found a meetup.com message board for gamers in West L.A., so who knows? Wish me luck!

Until next time, Christian

Iron Rations

basic d&d

Devon was impressed. Abel's fighting ability had improved a great deal since Apris came into his life. Perhaps it was a boost in morale, or simply the fact that Abel was using his shield to block blows instead of his face. Whatever the reason for Abel's newfound prowess, Devon was glad. It was getting terribly sad to see Abel savaged every time he entered battle.

Apris the Wondrous, the party's newest member, was quite fond of Abel. She tended to his wounds and marveled at his strong muscles. All of this annoyed Aithne to no end. Aithne, a caustic elven woman from Far Isle, found humans to be irritating in the extreme. As she once explained to Devon, "Let us remember that we venture among the humans not out of choice, but out of necessity. We must learn their ways, no matter how base, in order to understand them completely. Their numbers increase every day, meaning that their settlements will soon encroach upon our lands. When that happens, there may be war."

Even though Devon was also an elf, he often had no idea what the hell Aithne was talking about. Devon liked to travel with humans simply because they had a lust for life and a frantic way of living that fascinated him. It was a huge, amazing world and Devon wanted to know all of it. In the meantime, however, he was getting to know goblins.

Moments ago, threatening rain clouds had finally released their load, dumping buckets of water upon the party. They sought shelter within an inviting cave, and judging by all the arrows flying at them, the cave also seemed inviting to a band of goblins. Abel stepped forward to draw attacks, while Devon, Aithne and Apris unleashed spells. Afterward, Devon and Aithne would fire some arrows of their own. Hopefully, Abel could hold out until then.

Below is a description of the cave the adventurers wandered into. Feel free to use and/or modify it for your campaign. The goblins' stats should be pretty easy to translate into almost any rpg system.

The Goblins' Lair

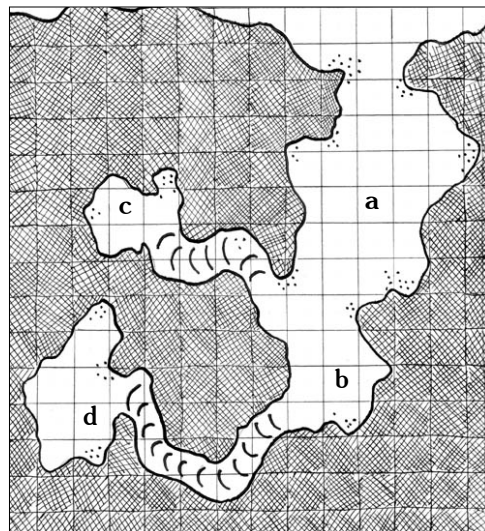
A small band of goblins, who were on the losing side of a power struggle within their former tribe, have taken up residence in these caves. They survive by raiding hen houses and stealing livestock from local farmsteads.

a) Entrance

Six filthy humanoids sit around a fire, sharpening their knives and preparing a spit. The humanoids are about 3' tall and have skin that is a pale, earthy color. Their red, beady eyes reflect the light of the fire. The creatures yammer to one another in their crude language, while passing a jug back and forth. There is a wide exit at the end of this chamber.

Six goblins eat, rest and pass their time here. When the party enters, they are building a fire and sharpening their knives so that they can butcher the sheep from area c. When intruders enter their lair, two goblins will fall back to fire arrows, while the other four engage in melee. The goblins do not have a sentry so they may be surprised. If the invading party appears to be either more numerous and/or powerful looking, the goblins may be inclined to parlay. They will gesture that they do not wish to fight if the intruders simply leave.

Goblins (6): AC 6, Hit Dice 1-1, Hit Points 3, Move 20', Attacks 1, Damage 1-6 short bow or 1-6 short sword, Morale 7.



The Goblins' Lair

b) Leader's Mate

A goblin female, heavy with child, cowers in a corner. Near her is a filthy pile of rags she uses for a bed. Next to the rags, a large rat roasts on the coals within a brazier. There are two exits from this room, both of which appear to be narrow, natural staircases that descend deeper into the earth.

The goblin isn't much of a threat and will not enter battle, being more inclined to cower in a corner and hiss at the party. She will, however, scream an alarm to her mate in room d after the party enters the caves. If attacked, she will use a dagger hidden behind her back.

Goblin Female: AC 6, Hit Dice 1-1, Hit Points 3, Move 20', Attacks 1, Damage 1-4 dagger, Morale 7.

c) Dinner

The bones of a large animal litter the floor. Its massive skull now serves as an anchor for a sheep that is tied to it. The sheep bleats in misery as it drags the skull around the room.

The skeletal remains are those of a cave bear that succumbed to disease years ago. The sheep was stolen recently by the goblins during one of their raids. There is nothing else of value in this room.

d) Leader's Chamber

There's little to be seen in this chamber besides a cot, some earthenware jugs and a brazier. A recessed space to the right of the entrance holds a crude shrine to some wicked goblin deity.

The jugs are filled with wine stolen by the goblins on yet another one of their forays. A few are empty and in one of those will be found 20 sp and 90 cp. The altar consists of a roughly carved idol and some offerings, including a jug of wine, 1 gold coin and the severed head of what appears to be a young human male. When not leading the other goblins on a raid, the leader will be found here. He passes the time drinking, sleeping or trying to coax his mate into coupling with him. She has been resistant to his advances of late, hence her sleeping in a separate room. Due to his 20' move rate, it will take the goblin 3 rounds to reach area 1 if a fight erupts.

Goblin Leader: AC 6, Hit Dice 1-1, Hit Points 5, Move 20', Attacks 1, Damage 1-6 short bow or 1-6 short sword, Morale 7.

Conclusion

Perhaps the farmers the goblins have raided will offer a reward for the party's hard work? Moreover, who (or what) will inhabit the cave complex now that the goblins have been dispatched? Learn more about Devon and his companions in Iridia 2, 3, 6, 7 and 9.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
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On Point

I've been meaning to dust off my Star Frontiers rulebook. For this issue, I've finally decided to do so. I hope it's the start of a sporadic series of articles similar to the Iron Rations material for Basic D&D. Back in the day, my friends and I had a lot of fun with the game. I always ran Star Frontiers in a cyberpunk style, since I began playing it close to the time I read William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Walter Williams' *Hardwired*. If my Star Frontiers material seems less space opera and more "street", you'll understand why.

Until next time, Christian

A Life Among The Stars

star frontiers

Gavin Light was happy to leave his old life behind. There was nothing for him on his homeworld except a failed marriage and a criminal record.

One year into his prison sentence for robbery, Gavin's cell block was visited by a personnel recruiter. The recruiter promised Gavin, and anyone else who was interested, a fresh start on Groth, a Dralasite world in the Frontier Sector. "Groth" didn't exactly roll off the tongue, but it had to be better than a 6' x 8' cell. All Gavin needed to do was serve two years in the planet's defense force and he would receive citizenship and a new identity. More importantly, he would be immediately paroled, which would shave four years off his sentence. Since Gavin had had about enough of prison, he immediately volunteered. With any luck, the old Gavin would be gone, along with his troubled past.

Gavin wasn't sure what to expect. He never saw himself as a soldier, but the recruiter assured him that everything would go smoothly and not to worry. The recruiter's exact words were, "You'll do nothing more dangerous than guard duty. The weapons training might even be fun. Think of it as a camping trip!" Gavin was, of course, skeptical. A clean slate was a lot to offer someone in exchange for two years of camping.

Two weeks later, Gavin found himself staring out the windows of a starliner's observation deck. On his lap, a lecturer on a holo-disk explained Dralasite physiology and culture. From what he was able to learn, Dralasites weren't exactly warlike, so perhaps two years in their military would pass smoothly. Dralasites seemed to be a very introspective, philosophical species, so they might even be able to help Gavin get his head straight. In just a few days the star liner would finally arrive in the Fromeltar system and his training would begin. It'd be interesting to see what the "camping trip" would really be like.

Note: The statblock at right represents Gavin before entering basic training. His abilities and skills will be updated as his story unfolds.

Gavin Light

human male (1.78m, 74.8kgs)

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 45/45
Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 60/55
Intuition/Logic: 50/45
Personality/Leadership: 50/45
Initiative Modifier: +6

Skills (Military PSA):

Projectile Weapons-1
Martial Arts-1

Weapons

Hand-to-Hand: % to hit: 40, Dmg: 4

Equipment

Chronocom, 250 credits



Illustration by Min Yum

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

Although battles in D&D are won and lost as a group, it's rare for player characters to focus on tactics and cohesive action. Usually, combat is a free-for-all, with PCs running willy nilly across the battle mat. This approach to combat often begins at the character creation level - feats in particular. Most feats are designed with the solitary hero in mind, despite the fact that role-playing games are a team effort.

In "A Dozen and Three Group Feats," Patrick Younts presents a fascinating selection of feats designed to make parties much more effective in combat. Characters will be required to sacrifice a bit of their individuality, but taking group feats will ensure that the party functions like a well-oiled battle machine.

This six page .pdf supplement also introduces something called "Tandem Feats." To work properly, two or more characters must possess the same feat for the benefit to be gained. The feats, Tandem Assault and Tandem Attack, model the tactics of Roman soldiers, or other, highly trained troops. Again, the idea is for the players to think of an adventuring group as a well-trained squad of fighters, rather than a loosely aligned group of strangers who wander around killing things for fun and profit.

The Tandem Feats reminded me of tactics employed by the players in an old campaign of mine. From 1985-1989, I ran a 1e AD&D game set in Greyhawk. There were six characters in the group and each was part of a "fire team," which consisted of two members. In battle, a character never left his fire team and all attacks were focused against a single foe. When doing so, a character and his fire team partner were very effective. I think that a pair of 3.5 fighters with Tandem Feats would be an awesome threat in combat, judging from my Greyhawk experience.

Although the feats might contribute to a min/max, powergame feel, I think they would be appropriate for the right kind of group. Certainly, characters with a military background should consider the feats. Moreover, characters who have spent some time fighting with one another, getting to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, would have a good role-playing excuse to maximize their combat potential.

I highly encourage you to purchase this supplement. At under \$2, how can you lose? The excellent archery feat at right is indicative of the quality. Please visit RPGNow.com today and do a keyword search for "A Dozen and Three Group Feats." You can also search for this supplement via its publisher, Ronin Arts.

Next week, I'll review another Ronin Arts supplement when I present "Behind the Spells - Dancing Lights" by Bret Boyd.



Cover Fire

You are very skilled at protecting your allies with suppressive cover fire. When you draw down your bow, you can devastate enemies who seek to harm your vulnerable allies.

Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes.

Benefits: While armed with a ranged weapon you can declare, as a full-round action, that you are providing cover fire for your allies. Until the start of your next turn, each time an ally within 60' performs an action that provokes an attack of opportunity, you can make an attack against any creature (or creatures) attempting to perform an attack of opportunity; if your attack successfully hits and inflicts damage, the creature is distracted, and suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to his attack roll. You can provide cover fire in this fashion a maximum number of times each round equal to the number of attacks of opportunity you can perform.

Since defending allies in this fashion requires absolute concentration, if you are struck while performing this action you must succeed at a Concentration check against DC 10 + damage inflicted. If the check is failed, you may not provide Cover Fire for the remainder of your turn.



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Iridia

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On Point

I am proud of the Iridia zine, so I want to share it with as many people as possible. However, I understand that print distribution will only reach a limited audience. The retro-grouch in me realizes that I have to evolve. As a result, I'm making older issues available in .pdf. Furthermore, I'm working on a weekly podcast to accompany each issue. The podcast will be a combination of "live reading" as well as commentary. I hope these steps have a positive impact on the zine's viability. Do be sure to check the Iridia homepage at www.IridiaZine.net for developments.

For this issue, I wanted to add a bit of background material to the Iron Rations installment from Iridia 12, which detailed a small goblin lair. Specifically, I wanted to present a map detailing the outside of the lair, another of the village nearby and finally, a regional view. As with all of the other Iron Rations articles, this one can be easily tailored to fit your own setting. I was also inspired to write another Iron Rations column after I ran a solo "playtest" of the encounter presented in Iridia 12. The heroes did quite well, slicing and dicing their way through the goblins in seven rounds.

Until next time, Christian

Iron Rations

basic d&d

To Devon Ashwood, the only thing more fascinating than watching Abel and Apris devour one another's faces was seeing them argue.

After hacking through the goblins with ease, Apris was rather upset. The final goblin they faced was a pregnant female. When confronted by the party, she backed into a corner, hissing and brandishing a knife. Abel did not hesitate to kill her. He had sustained a rather nasty wound earlier and was in a foul mood as a result. A quick sword blow to her throat ended it quickly.

Apris was shocked. "By the gods, Abel! How could you do such a thing!?"

"Do what?" Abel asked.

"You killed her when she was pregnant! Why? You should've just let her go!"

"Pregnant? I just thought it was fat. Besides, I didn't even know it was female. How can you tell, anyway?"

"Fat? Did you say fat?! What, are you going to stab me next?!" (Apris was terribly self-conscious about her weight, something that Aithne loved to bother her about.) With that final outburst, Apris stormed away in tears.

Devon stepped forward to console his friend. "It's not your fault, Abel. Apris is pretty sensitive and all the violence upsets her. How about we wait until the rain ends, then we'll leave? Our map says there's supposed to be a village nearby. We'll tell the locals that we killed some goblins and maybe they'll buy us a few pints to say thanks. By then, Apris should be feeling better."

Abel smiled at the suggestion. "Yeah, Devon, that sounds good. I think the sign we saw on our way here said something about a place called Combe. It sounds nice, real nice...."

The Hill

The cave within the hill has been a den for many creatures in the past. When the region was first settled, some 75 years ago, basilisks used the cave as a nesting area. The map of the hill indicates a number of paths leading to and from the entrance. The paths to the south of the entrance lead to two latrines, one for the goblin leader and the other for the rest of the band. The paths leading north head to the road. Just outside the

cave is a fire ring used for roasting stolen livestock.

Regional Map

The regional map shows the area around the village of Combe, as well as the goblins' hill. The scale is not indicated on the map, but each settlement, represented by a dot, is separated from the others by either a full day's walk, or a half-day's ride. The terrain consists of rolling hills, dense woodlands and open grasslands.

The Village of Combe

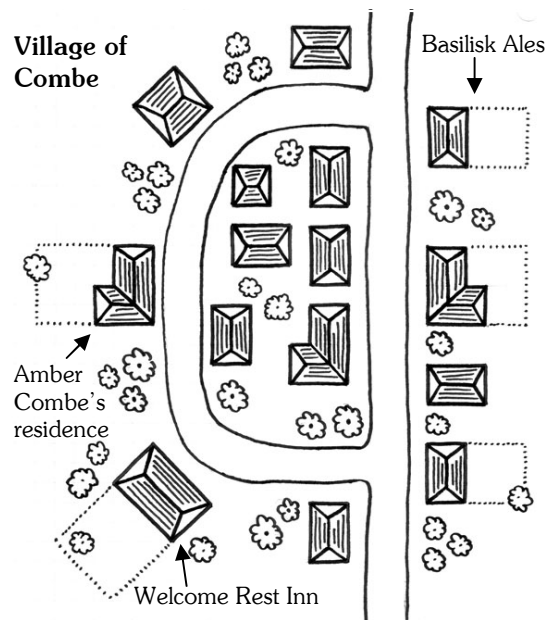
Grason Combe was a skilled warrior who built a reputation battling the basilisks that once roamed the area. The village, which lays along a busy trade route, was named after him.

The village's only inn - The Welcome Rest - is known for its stuffed grouse. A delicious meal and a night's stay (two guests to a room) can be had for 1 gp. The inn is a great place to learn about road conditions from the merchants who are passing through. It's also possible to secure work as a caravan guard from these same individuals.

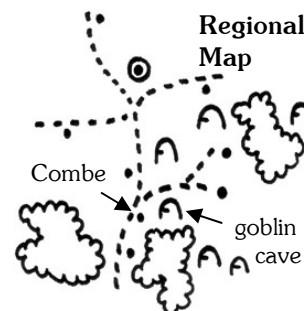
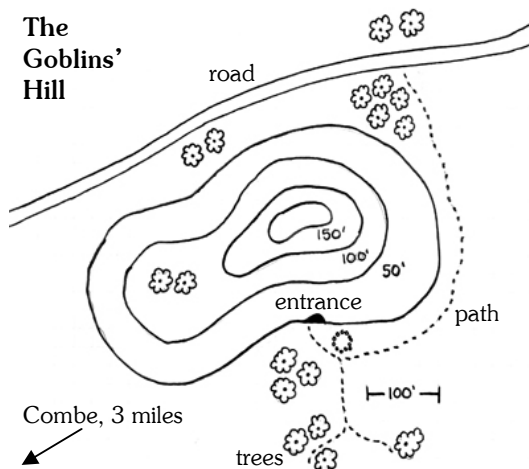
Amber Combe, a descendent of Grason, lives in the village. She makes a comfortable living collecting rent from the tracts of land she owns. Sadly, the family fortune has dwindled considerably due to mismanagement by several relatives. Always looking for a way to improve her finances, Amber is willing to underwrite any trade venture or expedition that will turn a profit. For example, Amber would like to fund a foray to investigate some ruins, which lay deep within a nearby forest. Her ancestor, Grason, never explored them, but he believed that the basilisks gathered all manner of treasure there. He speculated that the woods held some kind of great nest that spawned all the basilisks that terrorized the region. Grason wanted to mount an expedition himself, but he was unable to do so. His retainers were simply too afraid to go. In exchange for a portion of the treasure, Amber would provide gold to hire mercenaries and purchase supplies.

Visitors to Combe might also stop by Basilisk Ales, a small brewery run by Gimble Burrowell. Gimble, a halfling who exhibits the mirth and charm typical of his race, runs the operation with the help of his two nephews, Jenner and Tanner. Gimble has a rather irregular production schedule, so he often requires transportation services at the last minute. Therefore, he might be willing to hire the party to haul several kegs of ale to nearby towns and villages, provided the party has a wagon of its own and an honest disposition.

In the future I might detail the ruins, in addition to the other communities surrounding Combe. As always, there are just so many things I want to write about. Please see Iridia 2, 3, 6, 7, 9 and 12 for other Iron Rations installments.



A larger version of this map is available at www.IridiaZine.net.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been reading copies of my old Scrollworks zine. I really wish I had digital copies of the issues so that I could reprint them. Instead, I'm going to revise and publish some of the articles that supported the Freelands of Mirrym, the homebrew setting for Scrollworks. I'll start this issue with a few NPCs that embody one of the themes of the setting, specifically, the idea that everyone deserves a second chance.

In other news, Iridia now has a weekly podcast. I'm still learning how to record and edit, so you'll have to bear with me. By the time you receive this issue, two episodes should be up. Give them a listen at www.IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

Gideon, Colin and Wistrom are three men who are attempting to re-invent themselves. Despite their past failings, they truly believe that they can make a fresh start in life. They just need the right opportunity.

Gideon

"I'm tired of listening to people talk about all the stuff they should have done, or could have done. In the end they did nothing and I think that's pretty sad."

Gideon

Gideon's hard luck tale began a few years ago when he was serving as a guard for a mining company. During a raid on the mine he was protecting, a bandit smashed him in the head with a club. Gideon woke up several days later with a terrible headache and the loss of hearing in one ear. Gideon started drinking heavily to numb the pain and ended up getting fired. Demoralized, he began to drink even more and eventually wound up working in a warehouse.

After realizing that manual labor would get him nowhere, Gideon got his act together. Although he's still tempted to drink and often suffers from bouts of depression, Gideon is doing his best to improve his reputation as a warrior. In light of his past, Gideon would rather avoid employment involving guard duty. Because he's a skilled rider, Gideon hopes to serve as a scout for a merchant caravan, or perhaps find work as a road warden. Currently, he lives in the town of Holsinger on Streele.

Gideon, male human War1; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 170 lbs); CR 1/2; HD 1d8+1; hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AL CG; *Armor:* AC 18 (+1 light wooden shield, +5 chainmail, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 16.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2; Melee: Longsword +3 (+1 BAB, +1 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0.

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Listen +1, Ride +4, Spot +1, Swim +3 (-3 in armor); Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Chainmail, light wooden shield, longsword, light riding horse, bit and bridle, saddle bags.

Shepard McComb

"I'm not sure which was worse, the wolves who devoured my flock or the wolf who left me when I needed her the most."
Shepard

Shepard recently met with tragedy when wolves tore apart his flock of sheep. Penniless, his luck only got worse when his wife left him. As she walked out the door she said, "My parents were right. You're not a real man. A real man would have defended his flock."

His spirit crushed, Shepard hopes to create a new life for himself. He acquired a few survival skills while tending his sheep and would like to offer them to an employer. If he serves as a porter or lantern bearer, then perhaps he'll earn enough gold to rebuild his flock. Shepard's Spot and Listen skills might also make him useful as a sentry. To this end, Shepard spends a great deal of time at the Quiet Thyme tavern in the village of Camber Mill. With hat in hand, he approaches anyone he thinks will offer him work.

Shepard, male human Com1; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 190 lbs); CR 1/4; HD 1d4+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL CG;

Armor: AC 12 (+1 padded armor, +1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 11.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp +0;
Melee: Dagger -4 (1d4, 19-20/x2);
Ranged: Sling +1 (+1 dex) (1d4, x2).

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 12 (+1), Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Hide +3, Listen +4, Profession (shepherd) +3, Spot +4, Swim +2; Iron Will.

Possessions: Padded leather, sling, 20 bullets.

Wistrom

"I'll give the hero routine a shot, but only if I dish out more pain than I take."
Wistrom

Wistrom cringes when he recalls his childhood. His mother was a foul-mouthed tavern wench and his father a drunken thug. Wistrom collected bruises the way other children collected marbles.

Violence begets violence, so it was no surprise that Wistrom wound up as a criminal. He served as an enforcer for the thieves' guild in Perganon, but the job ate at his conscience. Rather than bust up the rib cage of middle-aged shopkeepers, Wistrom began to sell his services as warrior. Bandits tend to put up more of a fight than old ladies who won't pay protection money, but the work is definitely more rewarding.

Wistrom wields a longsword, but he also loves to brawl with his fists. He can be found working the long stretch of road between Venable and Perganon, either guarding merchant caravans or collecting bounties.

My Freelands of Mirrym campaign cast the players in the role of law enforcement officers. Their professions included road wardens (men who patrolled the roads), bounty hunters and investigators. As a result, all three NPCs in this article were eventually encountered by the party. Their characters told Shepard to get lost, certain that he'd get himself killed. They crossed paths with Gideon on the open road, but it was mostly a role-play encounter. Wistrom made the biggest impact on the party. The group's leader, Micah, took Wistrom under his wing and trained him as a fighter. He eventually gained three levels in that class and later left the party to become a constable. Talk about coming full circle!

Wistrom, male human War2; Medium humanoid (6' 0", 220 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d8+4; hp 16; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 13 (+3 studded leather), touch 10, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +5;
Melee: Longsword +5 (+2 BAB, +2 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+3, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0.

Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 10, Con 15 (+2), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +1, Bluff +1, Intimidate +4, Listen +1, Spot +2; Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Studded leather, longsword.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I'll be out of town from time to time this summer. There's a trip to San Francisco, lots of concerts at the Hollywood Bowl and a visit to the South. As a result, I need to get ahead in the production schedule. I'll be scribbling away like mad, so if you receive issues early, you'll know why.

I want to return to Greyhawk for this week's Iridia. In issues 4 and 5, I introduced a warehouse in Perrenland's Traft, so I'd like to continue in that region. Since Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean" is currently in theaters, I'll go with a pirate theme!

Do be sure to visit IridiaZine.net to download back issues in .pdf. You can also view larger versions of the maps presented in each issue, as well as listen to podcast commentary.

Until next time, Christian

The Pirates of Fressa Cove

world of greyhawk

Spring on Lake Quag heralds a flurry of activity. Ports that held their vessels captive in frozen waters all winter now let loose their icy grip. Also unleashed are raiders who are desperate for spoils after months of confinement due to inclement weather. One such group consists of sixteen men who are plundering traffic near Traft. The buccaneers have experience as fishermen and mercenary archers, so they are well-suited for the task.

Their leader is Gabriel Karstula, a vicious criminal with a long, sordid past. He is shrewd enough to realize that it's only a matter of time before they are driven off, killed, or captured. In preparation, he's hidden their spoils within a cave overlooking the cove where their boat is anchored. If they are forced to flee the area, Gabriel plans on coming back to reclaim them at a later date. Moreover, Gabriel has procured a potion of water breathing. He keeps the existence of the potion a secret. If necessary, he will use it to fake his own death by pretending to drown.

Tactics

The pirates' vessel is manned by 15 buccaneers. Gabriel controls the rudder in the stern of the ship, while six men handle rigging. This leaves nine pirates free to employ missile weapons. On a day with no wind, all 15 crewmen must work the oars.

The pirates' preferred tactic is to close within 200 feet, then begin firing volleys of arrows. Keel boats have a very slow movement rate of 1 mile/hour, or 8' per round. As a result, quite a few arrows can be loosed before the distance between vessels is closed. Once alongside another boat, the pirates will perform boarding actions.

Because their boat is rather small and they only have 16 members, the pirates only attack vessels their size or smaller. This has resulted in meager gains because the smaller craft cannot carry large, valuable cargoes. After securing a prize's cargo and killing its crew, the pirates use axes to hack through the hull of the vessel (hardness 5, 20 hit points) in order to sink it.

Using the Pirates in Play

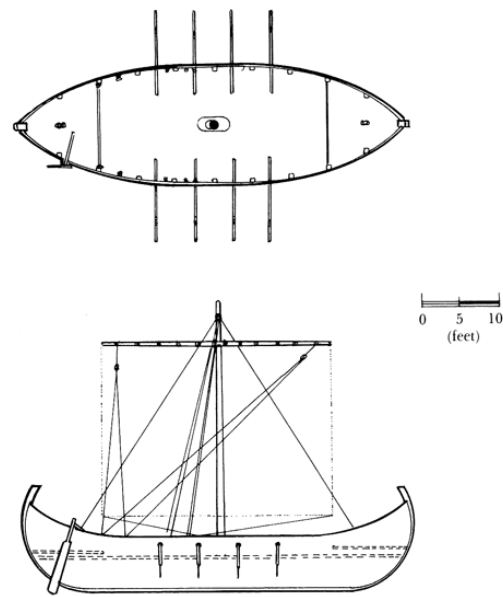
Matthias Vinder (the warehouse guard from Iridia 4) will inform the party that a small pirate vessel is active in the area. A reward of 100 marks is being offered to anyone who kills or captures the raiders. Either the PCs can hire a boat to go searching for the raiders, or they can ride up and down the coast on horseback to look

for the pirates' anchorage. This last option is a suggestion from Matthias. He knows that a small craft like the one being used by the raiders will most likely be anchored nearby, since it lacks the ability to make a long range voyage.

If the party hires a boat to search for the pirates, they will need to sail in the vicinity of Traft for 1d4 days before encountering the pirates. The party will be able to hire a keelboat like the one used by the pirates for 3 gp/day. The captain (Exp5) and eight crew (Exp1) of the keelboat will not fight the pirates unless it looks as if their vessel will be overrun.

If the party travels by land to find the pirates' anchorage, they will need to head south along the shore for 10 miles. The pirates are using a small cove to stow their goods and to rest between raids. The DM should decide if he wants the party to encounter the pirates during the day or night. During the day, the pirates will be absent, allowing the party to set up an ambush. At night, the pirates will be found sitting around a fire ring, eating, drinking or prepping their boat for the next raid. They have accumulated trade goods that can be sold for 300 marks.

It's important to note that the pirates' keelboat is a prize in itself. A group of characters should be able to sell the vessel for 1,500 in coins and bartered goods, provided the ship was not damaged too seriously when it was seized. Enterprising characters might decide to lease the boat to an aspiring merchant. Doing so might earn them a monthly income of 10 marks/month. Then again, the players could keep the boat and start their own merchant (or pirate) careers.



Page 132 of the PHB includes more details about keelboats.

Gabriel Karstula, male human Ftr4; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 165 lbs); CR 4; HD 4d10+8; hp 33; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 14 (+2 leather, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 12.

Attacks: Base Atk +4, Grp +6;

Melee: Longsword +8 (+4 BAB, +2 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 masterwork longsword) (d8+4, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1.

Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 15 (+2), Con 14 (+2), Int 12 (+1), Wis 11, Cha 11.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +2, Climb +3, Intimidate +4, Jump +3, Knowledge (geography, Lake Quag) +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +4; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, potion of water breathing.

Pirate, male human War2; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 160 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d8+2; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 13 (+2 leather, +1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 12.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +3;

Melee: Longsword +3 (+2 BAB, +1 str) (d8+1, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Longbow +4 (+2 BAB, +1 weapon focus, +1 dex) (d8, x3).

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +1, Jump +2, Knowledge (geography, Lake Quag) +2, Profession (sailor) +6, Swim +3; Skill Focus (profession, sailor), Weapon Focus (longbow).

Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, longbow, 20 arrows.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I thought about changing the format of Iridia from a single-sheet zine to digest. While I love the look and feel of a digest, I realize that it takes too much work to publish. In its current form, Iridia is easily written and produced. More importantly, Iridia is easy to archive in .pdf format. If people want copies, they can always print issues from their desktop after downloading them from IridiaZine.net. That's not so easy to do with a digest. To handle the occasional need for more space within an issue, I'll simply run two-part articles if need be. I think I'm slowly getting the hang of Audacity. Do be sure to visit the website to download each week's podcast.

Finally, pour a 40 on the curb for David C. Sutherland, who passed away recently. For nearly 25 years, Sutherland worked as an artist for TSR. Producing countless works at an incredible rate, he helped illustrate the games of our imagination for generations of players. Classic examples of his work include the covers for the AD&D PHB, DMG and MM. Cards and sentiments can be sent to his sister, Trudy DeKeuster, at 13911 Castelar Circle, Omaha, NE 68144.

Until next time, Christian

Sharby's Sow

exploring the freelands of mirrym
by john toppe

Denz Sharby spent the first half of his adult life working the farm he inherited from his father. With his wife Carlee by his side, Denz was able to provide just enough food to survive. In his meager free time Denz developed his talent for carpentry and woodworking. Denz used the profits from his carpentry to buy a pig, which he planned to raise for food.

That plan changed when Carlee found the pig digging a small hole in the yard. In the hole were rare Narshay mushrooms, a highly prized delicacy in the region. Denz took the pig into the woods near his farm and again the pig rooted out more of the mushrooms. The next morning Carlee took the mushrooms into the local market. When she returned that evening, she showed their profits to Denz. For the first time in his life, he held gold in his rough hands.

Thankful for the gift that they had in the pig, Denz and Carlee continued farming and searching for mushrooms. They saved the money so that one day they might retire, allowing Denz to work full time on his woodcrafts. When the pig died after eight years of hunting mushrooms, Denz and Carlee buried her in the woods where she had sniffed out all those valuable delicacies. They sold their property and moved to Perganon, where they found a nice house at the edge of town. Denz converted a room into a workshop and began his own business making quality furniture and decorative carvings.

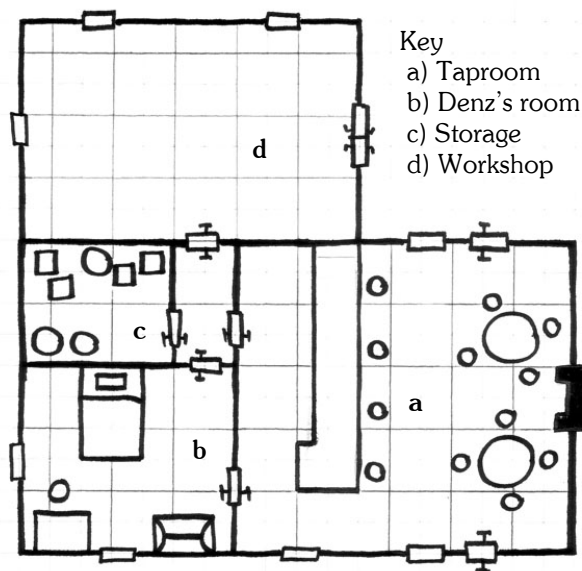
For three years Carlee and Denz enjoyed their new life in Perganon. One winter night, however, Carlee complained she was not feeling well and passed away within a few weeks. Denz was devastated at the loss and completely alone, since he and Carlee were unable to have any children. After several months of mourning, Denz realized that he needed to get on with life. The best way to do that, he thought, was to spend time with the good friends he had made in town.

He remodeled the front part of the house, converting the kitchen and living room into a taproom. He hung a beautifully carved sign of the pig that helped him earn his money outside and Sharby's Sow was born. During the day Denz does his woodworking and in the evening he opens the taproom to his friends and guests. Denz is not trying to make a large profit with the taproom; he just wants to spend time with friends. In

fact he loses money on the taproom, but this is compensated for by his earnings from his woodwork.

Because he made all the fixtures and furniture in the taproom, Denz strictly enforces his no brawling rule, which is also posted on the wall. All his friends respect this, while strangers quickly learn to comply. Behind the bar Denz displays a portrait of his dearly loved wife. Anyone who even remotely suggests that Carlee is "Sharby's Sow" gets his teeth loosened by Denz's meaty fist and is not welcomed back.

Christian says: I added a stat block for an assistant for Denz. I figure that he's a busy guy and might require the services of a runner. I'm not sure how to stat out adolescents in D&D, but I did my best to create a 14 year old boy. Also, DMs may need to add monetary reward for larcenous PCs. I suggest a small cash box behind the bar in the taproom. It will have, say, 30 sp and 50 cp. In Denz's bedroom, there might be gold coins, but not more than 10 or 20.



Sharby's Sow

Wooden Walls: 6" thick, Break DC 20, Hardness 5, Hit Points 60 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 25, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18;

Workshop Double Doors (good wooden doors): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Stuck 16/Barred 25. At night the doors are secured from within with a wooden sliding bar.

Denz Sharby, male human Com3; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 225 lbs); CR 2; HD 3d4+3; hp 11; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +4;

Melee: Club +4 (+1 BAB, +3 str) (d6+3, x2).

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 12 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 12 (+1), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 12 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Craft (carpenter) +8, Craft (brewer) +6, Handle Animal +3, Knowledge (local, Perganon) +4, Listen +2, Profession (farmer) +8; Skill Focus (craft, carpenter), Skill Focus (craft, brewer), Skill Focus (profession, farmer).

Possessions: Belt pouch with 3 gp, 6 sp.

Gunnar, male human; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 140 lbs); CR 1/4; HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp -1;

Melee: -5 (no weapon proficiencies);

Ranged: -3 (no weapon proficiencies).

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0.

Abilities: Str 9 (-1), Dex 12 (+1), Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Climb +1, Craft (carpenter) +1, Knowledge (local, Perganon) +2.

Possessions: Belt pouch with 3 cp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I'm back from San Francisco and behind schedule in my writing duties. I got terribly distracted a few weeks ago by spending lots of time at the beach and going away for a week didn't help. Iridia isn't widely distributed, so I don't anticipate hordes of readers sending angry missives about late issues. Nevertheless, I hate playing catch up. This week I finally get to some review material that's been sitting on my desk for a while, as well as dusting off an article from my old Scrollworks zine that I really like.

Until next time, Christian

Tokens of Luck

modest magicks
by dan taylor

A Token of Luck appears to be a minted coin identical to the local currency of the territory in which it is found. The only exception is that it appears to have been minted with the "heads" icon on both sides and is generally found in pristine condition.

There are four different kinds of Tokens, each made of a different precious metal and each providing a different form of luck. The luck that each token provides is as follows:

Copper Piece: Provides +1 when needed to successfully make a skill check that has been missed by one.

Silver Piece: Provides +1 when needed to successfully make a saving throw that has been missed by one.

Gold Piece: Provides +1 when needed to successfully hit when an attack has been missed by one.

Platinum Piece: Provides the benefits of two of the three items listed above. Roll a d6 and consult the table at right to determine which tokens are simulated.

A Token's magic only works when the character nearly succeeds at one of the actions listed above. It does not provide +1 for skill checks, saving throws or attack rolls.

A Token of Luck is usually found amid normal, non-magical coins and does not radiate any sort of magic. Characters may have a Token in their possession and not even know it. A spot check (with a difficulty class outlined on the table below) is required to realize that the coin is printed with "heads" on both sides. It's entirely possible that a character may have a Token in their possession for some time, benefiting from its powers, only to unknowingly hand it over to an innkeeper while paying for lodging.

Tokens of Luck are not created by individuals with the Craft Wondrous Item feat, but instead seem to appear by mere chance. Tokens of Luck also have the uncanny tendency to lose their enchantment if they are purchased as a known Token of Luck for any amount greater than a mundane coin of its same type. For example, if someone were to

d6 Roll	Actions
1-2	As Copper and Silver
3-4	As Copper and Gold
5-6	As Silver and Gold

Number of Coins	DC
Less than 25 coins	15
25 to 50 coins	20
51 to 100 coins	30
More than 100 coins	45

purchase a silver piece Token of Luck for 50 gp, it would no longer provide the +1 bonus.

Christian says: When this item was first printed, a Scrollworks reader named Nathan Blaco wrote to suggest the following: *I would suggest that GMs might craft a little story about a god of luck or trade who enchanted the coins for everyone to use, and that's why they cannot be made or sold. Also, GMs might limit the tokens to only one use per day.*

When I read "Legends are Made, not Born," a module from Joseph Goodman Games (reviewed in Iridia 7), I noticed a goddess of luck on page 18. Her name is Myna and I think she'd be an ideal creator of the Tokens of Luck.



Illustration by Daniel Williams

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

Behind the Spells - Dancing Lights by Bret Boyd is available as a \$1 pdf download from RPG Now (www.rpgnow.com). Published by Ronin Arts, Behind the Spells - Dancing Lights is the fifth in a series of supplements that closely examines spells common to the D&D game.

When I first started playing D&D, the only thing I liked about *Dancing Lights* was the illustration that accompanied it in the AD&D Players Handbook. Aside from that, I had no use for the spell. If I wanted my mage to distract an enemy, I was more likely to go with *Magic Missile*, because pain and the loss of hit points are as good of a distraction as any. Nevertheless, Bret Boyd expertly breathes new life into *Dancing Lights*.

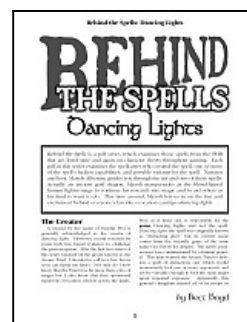
While *Dancing Lights* is designed to distract foes, there aren't any mechanics to govern this. Very surprising, given the fact that 3.5 has rules for darn near everything. Bret fills in the blanks by detailing two methods that either inflict a -2 circumstance penalty upon an enemy, or cause a foe to suffer the effects of being flanked. Both methods use *Dancing Lights* to trick an opponent into thinking they are being attacked by a spell.

Like other Behind the Spells series, an alternate version of the spell is presented. *Projectile Interceptors* is a nifty Bard 2, Sor/Wiz 1 spell that combines *Protection from Arrows*, *Shield* and *Dancing Lights*. The spell creates four, fist-sized balls of clear, gelatinous material. The orbs float around the caster and move to intercept inbound missile weapons. Each orb can absorb 5 hit points worth of damage, so there is a chance that a missile can pass through the orb to strike its intended target.

Finally, Bret presents a clever game using the *Dancing Lights* spell. It can be used as a training tool for young wizards, or it can provide rival wizards a way to duel one another in a non-lethal manner. In essence, the game is a version of musical chairs.

Each wizard uses *Dancing Lights* to create magical orbs, while empty jars float above their heads. The goal is for each wizard to move his lights into the jars before his rival. The rules for the game take about a page to explain, but they should play very easily during a session.

All in all, Behind the Spells - Dancing Lights presents balanced, creative uses for an often over-looked cantrip.



The *Dancing Lights* illustration from the AD&D Players Handbook.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Oh boy, Iridia is closing in on its 20th straight week of publication! I've been busy with other kinds of zines, too. I just finished the first issue of a personal zine called Troll Pocket. Troll Pocket is a 16 page digest and it's about my life here in L.A. I hope to publish it monthly, then use it to trade for the zines written by others. If you'd like a copy, you can pick one up for \$1 (plus 40 cents for PayPal fees) from the Iridia website.

While GURPS Basic provides rules for building monsters, there's nothing like a D&D Monster Manual. From time to time I'd like to present a monster Game Masters can inflict upon their players. I'll get things started with something simple - the giant rat! (I do so because the first monster I ever fought as a young gamer was a giant rat back in 1982.)

On a final note, I wanted to note the passing of Britt Daniel. Britt was a frequent poster on RPG.net and at EN World. Britt posted under the name Tetsujin. He was killed in a motorcycle accident in Oakland on Sunday, July 30. Perhaps you traded PMs with Tetsujin or participated in threads with him. Condolences can be sent to Andrea and Evan Daniel c/o End Game, 921 Washington Street, Oakland CA 94607. The next time you roll for initiative think of Britt, a fellow gamer who passed away too soon.

Until next time, Christian

Giant Rat

gurps 4e

*"Why should I be afraid of the sewers?
There's nothing down there but rats."*

Ernst Mayr, deceased

A giant rat is substantially larger than its other rodent cousins. Aggressive and cunning, giant rats have been known to hunt in packs of 5-10 (1d6+4) to overcome much larger foes. Giant rats grow to three feet in length (six feet if the tail is measured) and spread a disease called "Filth Fever" through their bite.



Giant Rat (-46 points)

SM -2 (3' long, 50 lbs.);
ST 7 [-30], DX 11 [20], IQ 4 [-120], HT 12 [20];
HP 7, Will 10 [30], Per 12 [40], FP 12;
Basic Speed 5.75, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0

Advantages and Perks

Discriminating Smell [15], Flexibility [5], Night Vision 5 [5],
Poison Bite: Sharp Teeth [1], plus Toxic Attack 1d (Onset, 1
hour, -20%; Cyclic, 1 day, 2 cycles, +20%; Follow-up,
Sharp Teeth, +0%; Resistible, HT-3, -15%) [5], Reduced
Consumption 3 (Cast Iron Stomach, -30%) [4], Resistant to
disease (+8 to resist) [5].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Quadruped [-35], Wild Animal [-30].

Skills

Brawling-12 [2], Climbing-14 [2], Stealth-13 [8], Survival
(urban)-13 [4].

Attacks

Poison Bite-12, 1d-4 cut, reach C.

Monica

gurps 4e

"I would punch you, but I might break a nail, so here's a kick to the groin."

Four nights a week, Monica Ceballos takes a kickboxing class at her local gym. She also runs five miles every morning and lifts weights. In short, Monica can bring it.

Her strength and quick reflexes have come in handy several times. First, there was a mugging attempt while she was at the pier with friends. The greasy man with yellow eyes thought better about taking Monica's purse after she pepper-sprayed him. Then there was that strange dog that tried to bite her. Well, at least Monica thinks it was a dog. She swore it had green fur and seemed to *scuttle* more than run. It took off pretty quickly after she punched it in the nose, though, so she didn't get too good of a look.

And then, on top of everything else, her brother's toy robot (Iridia 11) tried to claw her legs one night after class. After kicking its head across the street (Monica's instructor would have been proud of her form), she vowed to get her own apartment. Surely things would be more peaceful in her own space. Now if she could just figure out who kept text messaging "23" to her cell phone and why...

Dead Eye

d&d 3.5

Dragon 304 (pg. 84) included a feat that I think is very useful for archers. In essence, it's Weapon Expertise for a ranged weapon. I like this feat because it allows archers to deal damage without reliance upon enhanced arrows or a mighty bow. Furthermore, this feat ensures that a ranged weapon will remain an attractive option at higher levels. This feat might also make a good companion to Cover Fire, which was printed in Iridia 13.

I ran a campaign where this feat was used by the party's ranger. The amount of damage done was pretty impressive. It reminded me of archers from fantasy literature, who are able to kill lesser foes with a single arrow. A "One shot. One kill." sort of thing. I'd love to hear what you think about it.

Dead Eye

Your precision with ranged weapons translates into more telling strikes than you could normally make.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, base attack bonus +1, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (any ranged weapon).

Benefit: You may add your Dexterity bonus to all damage rolls made with ranged weapons for which you have the Weapon Focus feat, so long as the target is within 30 feet.

Special: Dead Eye does not increase the damage dealt to creatures that are immune to critical hits.

Monica (174 points)

SM 0 (5' 7" tall, 135 lbs.);
ST 12 [20], DX 13 [60], IQ 10, HT 13 [30];
HP 12, Will 12 [10], Per 10, FP 14 [3];
Basic Lift 29, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+2;
Basic Speed 7.0 [10], Basic Move 7;
Dodge 12, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Attractive (+1 to reaction rolls) [4], Combat Reflexes [15], Enhanced Dodge [15], Enhanced Parry (bare hands) [5], Fit [5], Language (spanish, accented) [4], Striking 1 [5].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Impulsiveness (9) [-15], Sense of Duty (family) [-5], Wealth (struggling) [-10], Only wears exercise clothes [-1].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-12 [4], Computer Operation-10 [1], Driving-13 [2], Karate-15 [12], Running-14 [4].

Attacks

Punch or kick-15, 1d+2 cr, reach C, parry 15.

Equipment

Cell phone, 2003 Jeep Liberty, \$40.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
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On Point

The longest campaign I ever ran was a 1e AD&D game that was set in the World of Greyhawk. The campaign featured 60 adventures or so. By the end, the most powerful character in the group, an elven Fighter-Magic User, had achieved several levels in both classes. Recently I looked over my notes to see if there was any material that might be dusted off and revised for an issue of Iridia.

One of the themes I noticed in the campaign were mixed-race bands of marauders. Many of the sessions took place in the northern section of the Vesve, with groups of orcs, goblins, hobgoblins and ogres rampaging about. In retrospect, I guess this makes sense since the Living Greyhawk Gazetteer states that unaligned humanoids are common in the region. I've written material for the World of Greyhawk in Iridia 4, 5 and 16, so the encounter below will fit right in. To date, all of the Greyhawk articles have been set in Perrenland, the eastern shore of Lake Quag to be precise.

Until next time, Christian

Marauders

world of greyhawk

"I'm tired of runnin'! It's time ta stand and fight!"

Rugorim, orc warrior

In the Vesve Forest, skirmishes are frequent. Humanoids from Iuz constantly raid the woodsmen and olve (elves), who refuse to yield. As a result, the north-eastern section of the Vesve Forest has been described as a "heavily wooded killing field." One group of humanoid raiders are lead by Rugorim, a euroz (orc) warrior with dreams of creating his own kingdom within the forest. Unfortunately for him, his bold plans have derailed.

Three weeks ago, Rugorim set out with a mixed group of euroz, jebli (goblins) and a few ogres. En route to a small hamlet Rugorim wanted to plunder, the band was attacked by wood elves and several human rangers. The ensuing battle claimed most of Rugorim's warband. Pursued west for several days, the ragged band of humanoids sought refuge in the Sepia Uplands, which lay along the Perrenland border.

Rugorim and the remnants of his band eventually found a cave to hide in. For the past week, they have been licking their wounds and planning their next move. Fearful that a return trip through the Vesve will result in their deaths, Rugorim is considering attacks on the noniz (gnomes) who live in the area. He hopes to find treasure, food and better shelter within their tunnels. Even as Rugorim plans, a noniz prospector named Schepni has spied the humanoids and is reporting their presence to the authorities in nearby Traft.

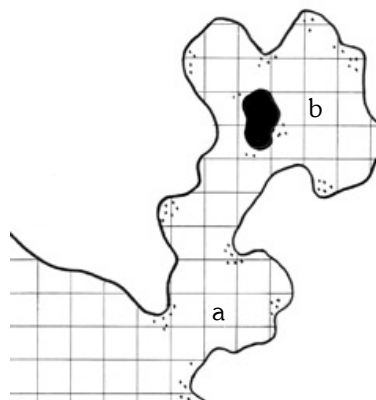
Traft is the location of a warehouse that was detailed in Iridia 4 and 5. If the players in your campaign are using it as a base of operations, then perhaps they might exterminate the humanoids that are recovering nearby. Word of Rugorim and his band will come from Schepni, who knows Matthias Vinder, the guardsman who watches the warehouse. (Matthias met Schepni years ago when Matthias was still a mercenary.) Schepni is terribly bothered by the humanoids and is fearful that they are advanced scouts for a much larger invasion force. (This is not true.) Schepni has collected a monetary reward from other noniz and would be willing to pay 25 marks (gold pieces) to each party member for driving off the humanoids.

Although he's not a warrior, Schepni (Exp3) would be willing to lead the party to Rugorim's cave, which lays two days to the east along seldom-used cart paths.

The Cave

Rugorim and his band are resting in a cave at the base of a hill. The ogre, Grabbock, is only able to fit within the first chamber (area "a") due to a low ceiling. (8' high in area a, 6' high in area b) The rest of the humanoid will be found in the rear of the cave in area "b." At night, the goblins stand guard in front of the cave, while Grabbock keeps watch during the day. Having been pursued this far by enemies, the marauders are tired of running and will stand and fight if attacked.

An online calculator suggested that the humanoids have an Encounter Level of 6. This seems reasonable, although the humanoids are all wounded, so perhaps 5 might be more fair. In the stat blocks below, there are two values for hit points. The first number is the creature's regular hit points. The number in parenthesis represents the current amount.



Rugorim and his band are recovering from wounds in this cave.

Rugorim, male orc War3; Medium humanoid; CR 2; HD 3d8+3; hp 15 (9); Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL CE;

Armor: AC 13 (+3 studded leather), touch 10, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +6;

Melee: Falchion +7 (+3 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus) (2d4+4/18-20).

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 17 (+3), Dex 11, Con 12 (+1), Int 8 (-1), Wis 7 (-2), Cha 6 (-2).

Languages: Common, orc.

Skills and Feats: Listen +1, Spot +2; Alertness, Weapon Focus (falchion).

Possessions: Falchion, maggoty biscuits, wineskin.

Orc (6), male War1; Medium humanoid; CR 1/2; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 (3); Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL CE;

Armor: AC 13 (+3 studded leather), touch 10, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +4;

Melee: Falchion +4 (+1 BAB, +3 str) (2d4+4/18-20).

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -2.

Abilities: Str 17 (+3), Dex 11, Con 12 (+1), Int 8 (-1), Wis 7 (-2), Cha 6 (-2).

Languages: Common, orc.

Skills and Feats: Listen +1, Spot +1; Alertness.

Possessions: Falchion, maggoty biscuits, wineskin.

Grabbock, male ogre; Large giant; CR 3; HD 4d8+11; hp 29 (15); Init -1; Spd 30 ft; AL CE;

Armor: AC 16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide armor), touch 8, flat-footed 16.

Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +12;

Melee: Great club +8 (2d8+7);

Ranged: Javelin +1 (1d8+5).

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60ft., low-light vision.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1.

Abilities: Str 21 (+5), Dex 8 (-1), Con 15 (+2), Int 6 (-2), Wis 10, Cha 7 (-2).

Languages: Common, ogre.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Listen +2, Spot +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (club).

Possessions: Belt pouch with 4 gp, 15 sp.

Goblin (2), male War1; Small humanoid (Goblinoid); CR 1/3; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 (3); Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 leather armor, +1 light shield), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp -3;

Melee: Morningstar +2 (1d6);

Ranged: Javelin +3 (1d4).

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60'.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 10, Wis 9 (-1), Cha 6 (-2).

Languages: Goblin, orc.

Skills and Feats: Hide +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Ride +4, Spot +2; Alertness.

Possessions: Rat jerky, wineskin.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
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On Point

I wrote Gaunt Willow while sitting on a bench, waiting for a ferry to Catalina island. I'd be willing to bet good money that I was the only person in the terminal who packed a D&D PHB and MM for the trip. I really hope I got Gaunt Willow's stat block right. In this week's podcast I'll address some of the design challenges. Do be sure to give the podcast a listen and let me know what you think. You can also send an e-mail to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Gaunt Willow

world of greyhawk

"Get out of my woods, all of you!"

Gaunt Willow

Tired of the savage warfare that has spoiled his home, Gaunt Willow has claimed a section of the Vesse as his own and allows no one to enter. Those who do intrude are either asked to leave, subdued with magic, or driven into the ground like a stake. Gaunt Willow simply wants to be left alone so that he can tend to the trees and vegetation that have been savaged by years of war.

Gaunt Willow is unique among his kind in that he is able to cast wizard spells. One day while patrolling his grove, Gaunt Willow discovered the body of an elf. He searched the body and soon discovered a spell book. Because of his own magical nature, Gaunt Willow was able to make sense of the arcane writing. He studied the spell book for months and was eventually able to cast a few of the spells. After thoughtful consideration, Gaunt Willow decided to summon a familiar, a large owl that roosts in his branches.

Gaunt Willow's domain is 5 square miles. Any humanoids found within his territory will be destroyed without hesitation. (See the next paragraph for tactics.) If Gaunt Willow encounters humans, he will often cast *Sleep* or misleading illusion spells to peacefully remove them from his woods. (Sleeping victims will awake unharmed a few miles away.) Elves are politely, yet firmly, asked to leave the area. It's not that he dislikes humans and elves, it's just that he refuses to allow any more battles to take place in his home. Gaunt Willow cannot be enlisted to fight against Iuz. If pressed, he will grow irritable. As Gaunt Willow gets more upset, the fireflies that nest within his eyes and mouth will take flight. This spectacle looks for all the world like a shower of sparks and is quite an unsettling sight.

In combat, Gaunt Willow is fond of ambush tactics. After his owl familiar informs Gaunt Willow of where hostile intruders are, the treant will animate two trees. These two trees are then placed in an optimal position for a surprise attack. After the animated trees complete their attacks, Gaunt Willow will then pound any survivors.

In a role-playing encounter, a DM could use Gaunt Willow to show how some forest creatures are tired of war and want nothing to do with it any longer. Even though characters might try to persuade Gaunt Willow to leave his grove to fight humanoids, the treant will not leave under any circumstance. Instead, PCs might use Gaunt Willow's xenophobia for their own benefit by leading a group of humanoids into his domain. This cynical manipulation of a treant might bother some, but it could also be a good way to demonstrate the tough choices that must be made in war.

On the next page are stat blocks for Gaunt Willow, his familiar and an animated tree.

Gaunt Willow, treant Wiz3

Huge Plant

HD: 7d8+35 (treant) + 3d4 (wizard)

Hit Points: 72

Initiative: -1

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural), touch 7,
flat footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+22

Attack: Slam +12 melee (2d6+9)

Full Attack: 2 slams +12 melee (2d6+9)

Space Reach: 15 ft/15 ft

Special Attacks: Animate trees, double damage
against objects, spells (see below), trample 2d6+3

Spells (4/3/1; save DC 11 + spell level, 0% arcane
spell failure chance): 0-*Dancing Lights* x2, *Ghost
Sounds*, *Message*; 1-*Silent Image*, *Sleep* x2; 2-
Summon Swarm

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 10/slashing,
low-light vision, plant traits, vulnerability to fire

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +2, Will +10

Abilities: Str 29 (+9), Dex 8 (-1), Con 21 (+5), Int 12
(+1), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 12 (+1)

Skills: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +3, Hide -9
(+16 in forest), Intimidate +6, Knowledge
(arcane) +4, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +8,
Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +4, Spot +8 (+11 in
shadows), Survival +8 (+10 aboveground)

Feats: Eschew Materials, Improved Sunder, Iron
Will, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll

CR: 11

Alignment: N

ECL: 15

See Monster Manual pages 244-245 for more infor-
mation on the treant. I suggest that an encounter
with Gaunt Willow, two animated trees and his famil-
iar would have an EL of 13.

Animated Tree

Huge Plant

HD: 7d8+35

Hit Points: 66

Initiative: -1

Speed: 10 ft.

AC: 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural), touch 7,
flat footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+22

Attack: Slam +12 melee (2d6+9)

Full Attack: 2 slams +12 melee (2d6+9)

Space Reach: 15 ft/15 ft

Special Attacks: Double damage

against objects, trample 2d6+3

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 10/slashing,
low-light vision, plant traits, vulnerability to fire

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +2, Will +8

Abilities: Str 29 (+9), Dex 8 (-1), Con 21 (+5), Int 12
(+1), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 12 (+1)

Skills: Hide -9 (+16 in forest), Listen +8, Spot +8

Feats: Improved Sunder, Power Attack

CR: 8

Alignment: N

Owl Familiar

Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 1d8

Hit Points: 36

Initiative: +3

Speed: 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Armor Class: 19 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch
15, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-11

Attack: Talons +10 melee (1d4-3)

Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.

Special Qualities: Low-light Vision, Familiar Abilities,
Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Empathetic Link,
Deliver Touch Spells

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +10

Abilities: Str 4 (-3), Dex 17 (+3), Con 10, Int 7 (-2),
Wis 14 (+2), Cha 4 (-3)

Skills: Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Spot +6 (+8 in
shadow)

Feats: Weapon Finesse

CR: 2

Alignment: N



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Iridia

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On Point

This week's issue features a random table from the old Scrollworks zine. I'm happy to be able to keep material from my former zine alive, to share it with new readers. I also wanted to write an NPC inspired by Stan Lee's excellent show, "Who Wants To Be A Super Hero," which appears on the Sci-Fi Channel.

I've decided to stop recording weekly a podcast for each issue. The shows were taking over an hour to produce and to be honest, there were only a few downloads each week. Perhaps I'll try again in the future. Enjoy the read and drop me a line with any comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

This, That and the Other Thing: Not Your Average Lass

random tables for your game

The scene is a familiar one. The intrepid heroes are seated around a rickety table in a back alley dive. With some time to kill, the PCs begin to look around for some role-playing opportunities. Flirting with buxom serving maidens is a popular option, but how many gorgeous women can one expect to find in dingy watering holes? Not Your Average Lass provides a d6 worth of tavern wenches, who will leave a lasting impression upon the characters in your campaign. Clever GMs can tweak each entry just a bit to accommodate modern or sci-fi role-playing sessions.

1) Bianca: Rail thin with long, spindly arms, Bianca struggles mightily to carry a tray of drinks across the tavern. The tray rocks back and forth in her unsteady hands, spilling ale onto the floor. By the time Bianca arrives at the table, the tankards are half-empty. She mumbles an apology and backs away from the table, tripping and falling onto the floor as she does so.

2) Miriam: She is afflicted by an ailment that causes her to cough a great deal, mostly on the characters' food and drinks. If questioned about her health, Miriam will respond that she feels fine, just as another coughing fit wracks her system. Perceptive characters may notice that the other patrons carefully wipe any glass Miriam has touched with a handkerchief.

3) Venus: Her service is decent and she's even mildly attractive, but the squalling toddler attached to her leg is a bit distracting. The child refuses to let go and is literally dragged around the room, deaf to Venus' pleas to let go. No amount of coaxing will convince the little girl to release her death grip and the more she is ignored, the louder her crying becomes.

4) Evelyn: She is middle-aged, with a sour expression permanently etched onto her heavily-lined face. Evelyn is rude to the point of being vicious. She lacks respect for anyone and proclaims her disdain for others without fear of retaliation. Regular guests of the tavern will gauge the characters' mettle by how well they suffer Evelyn's barbs.

5) Amber: She is withdrawn, shy and unwilling to look anyone in the eye. Amber silently creeps from table to table, not wanting to draw attention to herself. She is barely audible when speaking and is prone to trailing off mid-sentence. Because she is so unobtrusive, Amber overhears a great deal and may be a font of information.

6) Katherine: A plain, tall girl on the verge of tears. It's all she can do to keep from sobbing openly as she serves the customers. If pressed for details about what troubles her, she will begin to speak, but breaks down completely after just a few words. Inconsolable, Katherine will run out the back door, wailing.

Apollo

gurps 4e

"The light of truth shall clear away the shadows of deceit!"

Joseph Mora hates his day job. His night job, however, defines his existence.

Joseph earned his B.A. in Classical Studies from San Diego State University and his M.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Although his studies were fascinating, they offered him few job skills that he could apply to the world outside academia. For the past few years Joseph has attempted to make ends meet by working as a copy editor for a marketing firm in Los Angeles. Uninspired by his work and terribly depressed over his massive student loans, Joseph does the best he can.

He rents a one room, dilapidated apartment in North Hollywood. He doesn't make very much money as a copy editor, so his apartment is rather spartan. What he does have in abundance are comic books and books about ancient Rome and Greece. The comic books are a guilty pleasure, but within the stories of heroism and danger are echoes of a mythic past that Joseph loves to daydream about. Sometimes Joseph feels that he was born a few millennia too late. Perhaps his life would have been more glorious as the captain of a Greek trireme.

While fantasizing one day about heroes, both comic and mythic, Joseph hatched an idea. Why not live as a hero? It might be fun to combine comic book heroism with ancient mythology. After a trip to the hardware and fabric stores to put together a costume, Apollo was born!

Joseph's costume features a white, spandex body suit. He has gold boots, gloves, mask and cape. Since Apollo is the sun god, Joseph secured flashlights to his forearms and even wears a utility belt with all kinds of glow sticks, small flashlights, laser pointers, etc. As Apollo, Joseph wishes to shine the searing light of truth upon the injustices of the world.

Joseph was so happy with himself that he wanted to show off his costume, but he couldn't exactly parade down the street in a home-made super hero costume, or could he? Downtown Hollywood isn't too far from Joseph's apartment and in a place like that, he might not even get a second glance. Hollywood is *that* strange.

On a Friday night Joseph went walking the streets of Hollywood. Normally shy and reserved, Joseph was encouraged by the enthusiastic responses he received. A couple on a sight-seeing tour from Sheboygan, WI asked him to pose for a picture. He used his flashlights to help a tipsy party girl find her car keys under a sewer grate. Joseph even gave a glow stick to a homeless man who was afraid of "the big ol' giant rats that live in the alleys and eat hookers."

Since that night, Joseph has decided to patrol the streets of Hollywood four nights a week. He's even attained minor celebrity status in the area and had his photo appear in an issue of L.A. Weekly. Although he's been attacked by a mugger and was hit in the head with a bottle thrown at him by a drunk, Joseph enjoys shining a helpful light onto rather dark and dangerous streets.

Now if he could just get a better day job and pay off his student loan...

Joseph Mora aka Apollo (59 points)

SM 0 (5' 10" tall, 175 lbs.);
ST 11 [10], DX 10, IQ 13 [60], HT 11 [10];
HP 11, Will 13, Per 13, FP 11;
Basic Lift 24, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+1;
Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Daredevil [15], Honest Face [1], Reputation (being helpful and kind, downtown Hollywood, all the time; +2 to reactions) [3].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Charitable (9) [-22], Debt 20 [-20] Secret (serious embarrassment) [-5], Sense of Duty (humanity) [-15].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-13 [1], Computer Operation-13 [4], Driving-10 [2], History (classical)-13 [12], Sewing 10 [1], Writing-13 [2].

Attacks

Mag Lite-5 (short sword default), 1d+2 cr, reach 1, parry 5.

Equipment

Palm Treo 650 smart phone, flashlights, super hero costume.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Hello, all. I've got another random table from the old Scrollworks zine to share this week. I ran back to back random tables in Iridia 6 and 7, so thought I'd continue with an established pattern. I also have a new entry for my GURPS bestiary. Since I wrote about a treant the week before last, I figured I'd revisit that territory while it was still on my mind. In other news, I'm trying to increase the circulation of this rag beyond the five or six close friends and relatives who read each week's issue. If you have some suggestions on how to increase the readership, hit me up with your ideas at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

This, That and the Other Thing: A Horse is a Horse...

random tables for your game

Horses don't get a lot of attention in role-playing games. They're big, characters ride them around and they often get devoured by beasties. Nevertheless, I think that defining a horse's personality can add a bit of flavor to a campaign. If your game features exotic mounts, like griffons, the entries can still be applied.

If you are writing stat blocks for mounts, the descriptions below might hint at skills, feats, advantages or disadvantages that can be assigned.

1) Amber: People wearing cloaks, capes and other loose clothing should not stand too close. This horse has developed a taste for cloth and will begin munching on any clothing it can reach. Attempting to pull a garment from the horse's mouth results in a humorous tug of war. Characters with magical cloaks should be careful around Amber...

2) Zeus: This stallion is fearless in battle. He will charge into a line of pikes and trample foes with zeal. However, children annoy him to no end. Whenever children (or halflings) come near, the stallion grows agitated and requires a great deal of soothing to calm down. If a child persists in its efforts to pet Zeus, he will bare his teeth in a menacing fashion.

3) Ruth: This mare spent the early part of her life pulling wagons for a cruel master. She still recalls the painful whip and back-breaking loads. Whenever a wagon or cart comes near, the mare will kick and rear. She will bite anyone who attempts to harness her to a wagon.

4) Myst: This mare is very affectionate. She is a terrible flirt and tends to prance and strut whenever males are around. Men who ignore her attention-getting behavior are shunned and will not be allowed to mount unless they pat her on the neck or give her a carrot. Myst does not perform as well for female riders, resulting in penalties to riding skill checks.

5) Delilah: This mare requires a great deal of attention. After being brushed, she will roll in the dirt (or her own filth) so that her owner will have to groom her again. Sometimes she even pretends to be lame in order to have her leg massaged. If this behavior is indulged, then her owner will enjoy a faithful, loyal friend.

6) Sampson: This stallion does not get along with other horses. He bites and kicks at any horse that is placed in the same stable. Moreover, very few stable hands will work with him due to his aggressive nature. This behavior is also carried onto the battlefield, where he is especially adept at trample attacks.

Treant

gurps 4e

"I'll never go into the Westwood again. The trees are bewitched!"

Gabriel, woodcutter

Treants are sentient trees that act as jealous defenders of the forest. Treants adopt a section of a woodland as their own, then devote their lives to nurturing the vegetation within. A treant will allow passage through its woods, so long as the visitors do not start fires, or lay axe to wood. Those who do so are attacked, or at the very least, threatened. Treants care little for the affairs of men, but find their destructiveness disconcerting. Treants are natural allies with elves and other woodland races. Under no circumstance will a treant venture outside its forest.

Treants are solitary creatures. Enchanted forests will have no more than one treant for every 10 square miles of woodland. Once every five years, all of the treants within a forest will meet to share news and renew friendships. These meetings tend to last a few weeks and are exclusive. Treants will not tolerate visitors during this time. Treants are asexual and reproduce only once during their lifetime. This process involves the production of a special seed that is planted in rich soil, then carefully tended. This usually occurs near the end of a treant's life. The young treant, often called a "sprout," is cared for by its parent for at least 10 years.

A treant's leaves are deep green in the spring and summer. During the fall and winter the leaves change to yellow, orange or red, but they rarely fall out. A treant's legs fit together when closed to look like the trunk of a tree. A motionless treant is nearly indistinguishable from a tree. A treant is about 30 feet tall, with a trunk nearly 3' in diameter. It weighs about 4,500 pounds. Due to its wide stance and sweeping branches, a treant occupies a space 3 hexes in diameter.

Treants have a reach of 3 hexes and receive a +4 bonus to grapple man-sized (SM 0) creatures. Their favored tactic is to either slam foes with their branches or trample them.

Evil wizards prize the trunks of treants, which they use to craft wands and staves of fell power.

Treant (395 points)

SM +4 (30' tall, 4,500 lbs.);
ST 35 (size, -40%) [150], DX 10, IQ 10, HT 14 [40];
HP 35, Will 15 [25], Per 15 [25], FP 14;
Basic Lift 245, Damage: Thr 4d-1/Sw 6d+1;
Basic Speed 6, Basic Move 6;
Dodge 9, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 1.

Advantages and Perks

Damage Resistance 1 [5], Doesn't Breathe (oxygen and CO2 absorption) [15], Doesn't Sleep [20], Extended Lifespan 2 [4], Immunity (metabolic hazards) [30], Injury Tolerance (homogenous) [40], Plant Empathy [5], Speak with Plants [15], Temperature Tolerance 3 (7°-104°) [3].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dependency (sunlight, very common, daily) [-15], Dependency (water soluble nutrients found in soil, very common, weekly) [-10], Disturbing Voice (-2 to reaction rolls) [-10], Fragile (combustible) [-5], Sense of Duty (forest inhabitants) [-10].

Skills

Brawling-14 [12], Camouflage-15 [2], Farming-13 [12], Gardening-12 [12], Herb Lore-11 [12], Naturalist-13 [16], Observation-15 [2], Tracking-15 [2].

Attacks

Punch-14, 4d+3 cr, reach 3, parry-10.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

James Stubbs sent me a fascinating NPC about a year ago and I am so happy to finally present it to you. James has long been a supporter of my zines, so I'm grateful for his contribution to this week's issue. Last week I wrote up a treant for GURPS, but I didn't have room to include an animated tree like the Whomping Willow from the Harry Potter books, or that child-eating tree from Poltergeist. Gnarled trees that lash out at lonely souls on dark, narrow paths are a staple of fantasy, so I felt one last tree-related article was in order.

Until next time, Christian

Animated Tree

gurps 4e

Miguel is a second grader who loves Spider Man and is crazy about super heroes in general. After school Miguel cuts out pictures from his comic books and pins them to his walls. He does so because he hopes the super heroes will keep him safe from the tree in his back yard.

Miguel knows that something isn't right about that tree. At night its branches scrape against his window even though there isn't any wind. When he takes the trash out, he often trips over exposed roots that were below ground the day before. He tried to tell his parents about his concerns, but they accused him of having an overactive imagination. Miguel would love to chop the tree down, or set it on fire, but he shudders at the thought of the spanking he'd receive.

When motionless, an animated tree is indistinguishable from a normal tree. It stands about 30 feet tall, with a trunk nearly 3' in diameter. It weighs about 4,500 pounds. Due to its wide roots and sweeping branches, an animated tree occupies a space 3 hexes in diameter.

Animated trees are territorial and extremely aggressive. Although they can move, they only do so to seek out areas with better sunlight and soil. In the absence of rich soil, they will attack any creature that comes within its 3 hex reach. (Animated trees can sense movement upon the ground near their roots.) If the interloper is killed, the animated tree fertilizes the soil with the corpse. Animated trees lack intelligence. As a result, they are incapable of planning, tactics and communication.

Although generally considered a nuisance, some animated trees are valued as sentries.

Animated Tree (69 points)

SM +4 (30' tall, 4,500 lbs.);
ST 35 (size, -40%) [150], DX 10, IQ 0 [-200], HT 14 [40];
HP 35, Will 0, Per 0, FP 14;
Basic Lift 245, Damage: Thr 4d-1/Sw 6d+1;
Basic Speed 6, Basic Move 2 [-20];
Dodge 6, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 1.

Advantages and Perks

Damage Resistance 1 [5], Doesn't Breathe (oxygen and CO2 absorption) [15], Doesn't Sleep [20], Extended Lifespan 2 [4], Immunity (metabolic hazards) [30], Injury Tolerance (homogenous) [40], Temperature Tolerance 3 (7°–104°) [3].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dependency (sunlight, very common, daily) [-15], Dependency (water soluble nutrients found in soil, very common, weekly) [-10], Fragile (combustible) [-5].

Skills

Brawling-14 [12].

Attacks

Punch-14, 4d+3 cr, reach 3, parry-10.

Merrick the Grave Robber

d&d 3.5

by james stubbs

Merrick found the soil of a fresh grave much easier to excavate than the older ones. The moon peeked out from behind the clouds and the rat-like man shrank away from its baleful glow. Moonlight reflected from the granite monuments that surrounded him, each one a testament to a life fulfilled. It wasn't right for the living to be in a place of the dead. Merrick wasn't one to admit to being a coward, but no matter how often he pilaged graves, it unsettled him. Some things were better left alone. Sadly, his debtors didn't tend to agree.

So here he was, his lonely spade turning the earth and violating the final rest of another unfortunate soul. His only company was an old mare that pulled his rickety wagon. Merrick knew better than to question why he was paid for corpses, but his own mind had drawn too many ideas on its own - all of them morally repugnant. It's not that he considered himself a saint by any stretch of the imagination, but there were some things that were just wrong and he wasn't happy to contribute to them. Fortunately, misgivings about his work were something that could be obliterated from his mind by liberal amounts of rotgut. The hangovers from such swill were the kind that made him wish he was dead, but it was a punishment Merrick gladly accepted.

A hollow thunk reverberated from the tip of his shovel and Merrick crouched in his hole to examine the casket. The varnished mahogany emerged under his brushing fingertips, a gouge in the expensive wood the only sign of his intrusion. The brass latch was exactly where it should be. After more excavation it yielded easily to his prying.

Sara Linderstead was almost as lovely in death as she had been in life. The bouquet of daffodils was still fragrant around her fair hair. He felt like an intruder into her final serenity and felt compelled to close the lid. Merrick thought about her sudden passing and the grief that had washed through the small town. A pang of remorse swept through him that her sad tale would not end with her interment. Merrick guiltily rubbed his grubby hands against his breeches, thinking that her white gown and pale skin mocked his shameful filth.

He hated touching the bodies. The coldness of dead flesh pressing against his own was terribly disturbing. Merrick thought to himself, "This is not right!" He had been doing this dirty work for far too long. It wasn't cold, but he shivered anyway. Merrick hastily buried his thoughts and tried to concentrate on the job at hand.

Rigor mortis had naturally set in. This made it easier to get Sara out of her grave because he could just hoist her over the top. Her legs were still shapely and defined. The old nag hitched to his wagon neighed impatiently as Sara's golden tresses came over the edge of her plot. Merrick was painfully conscious of his hand against her thigh. He whispered, "I'm very sorry, Sara."

Within a few minutes, Merrick and his cargo made their way along a dark, winding road. With any luck, he'd be drunk in a few hours and this terrible night would be a dim, hazy memory.

Merrick the Grave Robber, male human Com2;
Medium humanoid (5' 6", 135 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d6;
hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL N;
Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.
Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +1;
Melee: Club (shovel) +2 (+1 BAB, +1 weapon focus)
(d6, x2).
Saves: Fort -1, Ref +0, Will -1.
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 8 (-1), Int 10, Wis 9
(-1), Cha 10.
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +1, Listen +4,
Profession (grave robber) +2, Spot +3; Alertness,
Weapon Focus (club).
Possessions: Shovel, cart, nag, bottle of rotgut, 5
sp, 8 cp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've decided to bring back the weekly podcast commentary. I was getting frustrated with the quality of the audio, as well as the time it took to record each show. The former will eventually be addressed when I buy a better microphone. The latter has been dealt with by reducing the amount of time spent on each week's podcast. I've done so by recording the show in fewer takes, as well as not mixing in miscellaneous sound files and special effects. There's an RSS feed at IridiaZine.net, so you can subscribe in order to be alerted when there's a new show.

Until next time, Christian

This, That and the Other Thing: Inn Rooms

random tables for your game

During a session, GMs rarely spend much time describing something as routine as the characters' rooms at the inn. Unless the scenario specifically calls for an encounter, most evenings at a hostel pass without incident. The eight rooms presented in this table are designed to provide for some memorable overnight stays.

- 1) The rats that live in the attic appear to be running some sort of marathon. They rush back and forth all night, causing quite a racket. Eventually, a cat pounces and the clamor that results is unreal. The cat hisses, rats squeak and people begin pounding on the ceiling. Things finally quiet down around midnight.
- 2) An aspiring minstrel is lodged next door to the party. He's not very good with his lute and his singing is even worse. His voice cracks as he croons about love lost, love found and love lost all over again. If the party pounds on the walls to get him to shut up, he will only sing louder.
- 3) The couple next door are hardly the picture of marital bliss. They fight long and loud into the night, stomping, shouting and banging furniture about. Eventually, there is much sobbing followed by wild love-making. Their make-up sex is almost as loud as their fighting.
- 4) Late at night, pebbles will begin bouncing off the windows of the characters' room. If they investigate, the party will find a man standing outside. He asks to be let into the inn, explaining that he is a lodger at the inn who stayed out too late drinking. He's now locked out and doesn't wish to sleep in the cold.
- 5) The party's sleep will be interrupted by a cool wind blowing in from the window. When a character gets up to close it, he finds that it has been shut all along. There appears to be no other source for the breeze. If the characters ask the innkeeper about the wind, he gives the party a sly wink then changes the subject.
- 6) It appears that a prankster is about. In the wee hours of the morning, the characters' door will be pounded on. If the party answers, they find no one there. This will happen again and again throughout the night. If the party sets up some sort of ambush, the annoying knocking will stop.
- 7) Lodging next door are a group of extremely loud drunkards. Throughout the night, the louts will curse, sing, challenge one another to wrestling matches and express their undying, brotherly love. If the party knocks on their door to complain, the men will shout, "Go away and get your own grog!"
- 8) The fellow upstairs wishes to become an adventurer. Equipped with a new sword and armor, he stays up late practicing his combat maneuvers. Throughout the evening, the party can hear him making up battle cries, crashing into furniture and leaping off his bed onto the floor. "Have at thee, beastie!"

The Hope Chest

exploring the freelands of mirrym

by liz rich

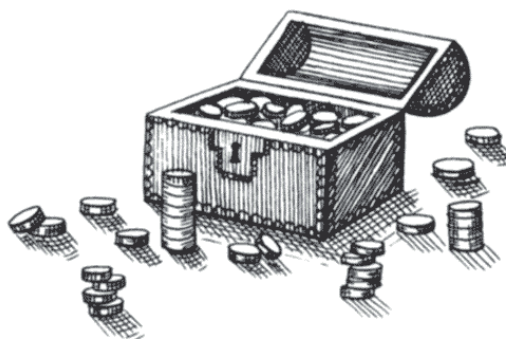
Hidden in the back room of a tiny store cramped with curios, sits a chest. Plain, and unadorned, it could be one of a hundred such chests. There is something familiar about it, however, as though if you closed your eyes and remembered, it would be sitting in the corner of grandmother's cottage, or at the foot of your childhood bed.

When opened, the Hope Chest reveals a long lost memento of great emotional worth. Perhaps a jaded princess would find the dress she wore to her first ball, while a knight might find the scarf given to him at his first tournament by a young maiden whose face was flushed with excitement. A young boy missing his home may find the blanket his mother used to tuck him in with, or the knife his father gave him on his tenth birthday.

Other than returning these lost mementos, the Hope Chest is non-magical. It does not radiate magic, nor will it ever reveal a magic item to the person who opens it, no matter how sentimental he may feel about that Vorpel Sword that was lost long ago. There are those who claim that the chest is magic of the very best kind. They say the happy tears that accompany long lost memories are worth any price, certainly more than the chest's weight in gold or powerful magic.

People who have encountered the chest tell of Madelyn, a sorceress so cold she would sell her friends' souls if the price were right. Determined to find the chest that always produced what the opener valued most, Madelyn stalked knowledge of it across miles and years. Finally tracking it to an old, friendly shopkeeper, she was puzzled and wary when he merely chuckled at her threats of magical doom and led her to a plain wooden chest in the back room of his shop. Reassuring herself that there were no traps, she gleefully opened the chest and pulled out a bouquet of dried wildflowers wrapped in a faded piece of blue linen.

Speechless, she stared at the bouquet before rushing teary-eyed out of the shop, leaving the shopkeeper shaking his head as he closed the chest.



To the person who opens it, the Hope Chest will reveal an item far more valuable than gold.

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

The Colonel Marbles Miniatures Review is a weekly vidcast from England that is definitely worth watching. In just a few minutes, the show's creator presents his top 10 miniatures of the week. It's clear to me that a lot of research goes into each week's show. There is news from companies I've never heard of before and product lines I didn't know existed. Colonel Marbles even features miniature lines that are in development by providing a peek at new sculpts, also called "greens."

I highly encourage you to visit <http://marblesminis.blogspot.com/>



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been crazy busy at work. On top of that, I've been surfing every day afterwards. As a result, I'm very behind in my writing duties. I hope to get caught up in the near future, though. I need to do so because I'm getting married next month. If I don't get caught up now, it definitely won't happen in October. ;)

Until next time, Christian

This, That and the Other Thing: "Wagons, ho!"

random tables for your game

In most campaigns, the player characters don't get overly concerned with trade and commerce. Wagons and their contents, however, eventually play a role in every campaign. For those times when characters either escort, raid, or encounter wagons, the random table below can help to determine the contents. In a modern or sci-fi game, the cargos below can be found within a semi's trailer or a space craft's hold.

1) Lumber: Various lengths of timber, ranging from long, heavy beams to thinner, shorter planks. The amount of wood present is sufficient to build a one room shack. Blueprints for the shack can be found with the wood, but no tools.

2) Poultry: Cages stuffed full of chickens are stacked precariously, leaning dangerously to one side. The hens within cluck contentedly as feathers drift through the air. The stench of rotting eggs and chicken poop is eye-watering.

3) Ale: The wagon groans under the weight of many kegs of ale. A colorful label depicts a jolly halfling lifting a large mug, as if giving a toast. The stamps on the kegs read "Basilisk Ales."

4) Fertilizer: This wagon will be smelled long before it is seen. The foul odor will either attract or deter attackers - GM's call. The fertilizer is extremely rich and will fetch a decent price at market. The drover is proud of his smelly cargo, going so far as to refer to it as "brown gold."

5) Rocks: The wagon is especially large and well-constructed. The drovers have a hard time keeping the team of oxen moving forward as the wagon groans under the weight of cut limestone.

6) Fish: Minimal steps were taken to preserve the fish within this wagon. As a result, the stench is terrible. Most of the cargo has spoiled and the drover is considering dumping the load by the side of the road. There is a chance that the smell may attract predators.

7) Prisoners: Sullen, dangerous men sit along each side of the wagon. They are chained together at the wrists and ankles. The convicts have a nasty look about them and are eager to escape. They will use any chaotic event as an opportunity to do so.

8) Hay: Bales of hay are stacked high and lean slightly to one side. The hay has been leaving a trail behind the wagon, a trail that bandits or beasties might follow.

9) Empty? In this instance, the wagon itself is the commodity. Newly built and in fine condition, the wagon is being delivered to the person who commissioned its construction.

10) Farm Fresh: Bushel baskets of corn, potatoes, carrots and other fresh produce fill the wagon to capacity.

Planetary Survey: Micah

classic traveller

Micah is a barren, rocky world with a thin belt of grassland at the equator. Its polar regions are permanently locked in ice. There are no large bodies of water, except for a small, icy sea in the southern hemisphere. The gravity is .9g and the cool star it orbits (micah 414) results in a low average temperature and long, dark winters. Precipitation is rare (2" per year) and most vegetation is scrub brush, stunted grass or tenacious lichen that clings to the rocks. The air levels are rather thin, so any prolonged physical exertion will result in fatigue, shortness of breath and headaches. The world is independent, mostly due to its remote location and meager resources that no one covets.

Native animal life consists of insects that lurk in rocky crevices and a limited variety of small rodents. One rodent in particular, the aurumvorax, is prized for its dense, golden coat. The small sea may support life, but a thorough exploration of it has yet to be undertaken. Avian life is nonexistent. Several years ago a small grazing animal was introduced on Micah. This stubby herbivore, called the Rothe, feeds on grass and lichen and provides the Micahns with fresh meat.

The world is noteworthy because of the Micah Institute of Advanced Analytical Sciences, located in Meridian (pop. 250,000). The Institute is famous for its mathematicians and physicists who, in the absence of outside distractions, have turned their minds inward. The Institute educates promising post-graduate students and also supports itself by solving complex problems submitted to the university by off-world engineers, governments and corporations.

Besides Meridian, there are very few inhabited areas. As a general rule, the citizens of Micah are a subdued lot, more cerebral than vocal. Most Micahns are affiliated with the Institute in some way and rely upon it for a living. A handful of inhabitants are involved in the trade of aurumvorax hides and the management of the Rothe herds.

The board of trustees that governs the Institute also acts as the planetary government. Appointment to the board is possible only through selection by the chairman and ratification by the other trustees. Most all of the board members are high ranking Institute professors and administrators. Occasionally, an ordinary citizen of Micah might grumble about the lack of popular representation. Most people, however, accept the fact that Micah would be sparsely populated without the Institute, so they defer to the board's judgment.

A small highport can be found above the planet. It is built upon the surface of an asteroid that was pulled into geostationary orbit above Meridian. It serves as a modest, yet sufficient, relay point for the X Boat network. Its downport counterpart is a few km. outside Meridian. Both the highport and downport are under the jurisdiction of the Imperium.

Micah offers a few adventure seeds that might intrigue an intrepid free agent.

1) A disgruntled graduate student from the Institute is murderous in his anger at having had his thesis rejected. The student comes from a wealthy family and is using a portion of his trust fund to finance the assassination of his advising professor. The players can act as either the assassins or as the professor's bodyguards.

2) An off-world crime syndicate is hoping to exploit Micah's citizens. The criminals plan to import the usual vices - prostitution, gambling, drugs, etc. The authorities on Micah are not equipped to deal with organized crime, so they turn to freelance professionals to solve the problem for them. Because the Micahns are quite peaceful, they will not tolerate a bloody rampage. Tact and discretion must be used.



Micah; Starport Type: C, Size 6, Atmosphere 5, Hydrographics 1, Population 4, Law Level 6, Government 5, Tech Level 10.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Sometimes when I write Iridia, I like to listen to 80s music. Tonight I have some Duran Duran playing. Good stuff. In this issue I'll share some more material from my Freelands of Mirrym setting, which provided the backdrop for most of the articles in the old Scrollworks zine. Over the coming months I think I'll present the entire setting. People really seemed to like it the first time around, so I hope that it will find new readers.

Until next time, Christian

The Quiet Thyme

exploring the freelands of mirrym

Camber Mill is home to the Quiet Thyme tavern, a notable establishment that adds to the village's reputation for hospitality. The Quiet Thyme's current owners, Duncan and Hilda Faulk, inherited the tavern from Hilda's uncle eight years ago. By all accounts, the couple does an excellent job of creating a comfortable environment for the merchants and locals who visit.

At least a century old, the Quiet Thyme is well-constructed. The walls are built from limestone, with heavy timbers supporting the vaulted roof. Most of the furniture is made by a local woodworker and is sturdy, yet uninspired. The furniture in Duncan's office is of finer quality, having been built with wood imported from the distant Woods of Horn. The bar, constructed of solid oak, is the tavern's most impressive feature. It is unique in that it was built by joining two massive pieces of oak at the corners. Each segment was carved from an ancient tree that was uprooted during a heavy storm.

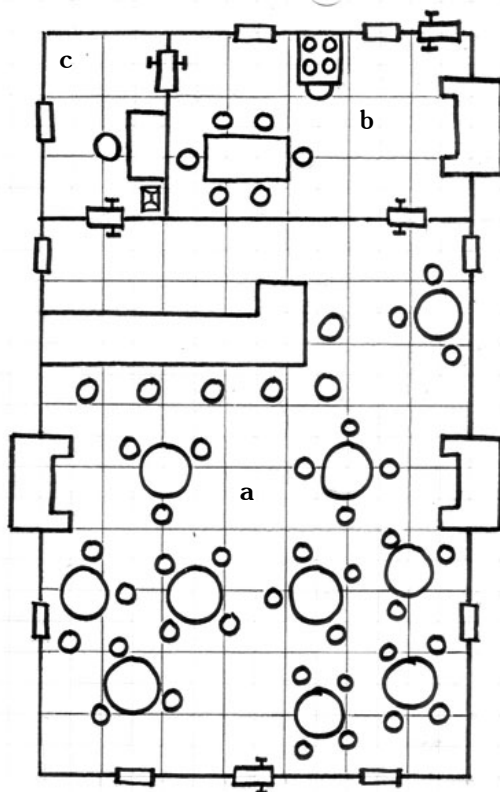
Two massive fireplaces warm the tavern. When fully stoked, it's not uncommon for patrons to move their chairs around the room in order to escape the infernos. The fireplaces have an enormous appetite, causing Hilda and Duncan to bemoan the amount of time and effort it takes to keep enough wood on hand during the winter months.

A small, yet well-stocked, kitchen provides delicious meals that are served morning, noon and night. Hilda rules the kitchen like her own little kingdom. She views lackluster efforts by the kitchen staff as high treason. Hilda is infamous for her tirades that spill out into the common area. As a result, no kitchen staffer lasts very long since no one can deal with her temper. Despite the kitchen drama, the Quiet Thyme specializes in marinated quail stuffed with bread, pomegranate seeds and cranberries. The recipe is a carefully guarded secret and no amount of coin will encourage Hilda to part with it.

Adjacent to the kitchen is a private office where Duncan sorts out the receipts, invoices and other business related correspondence. A small, locked chest (Open Lock DC 20) can be found under his desk. It contains the tavern's treasury (75 gp, 60 sp and 125 cp), as well as important paperwork, such as the title to the tavern and tax records.

Most of the tavern's patrons consist of the families in and around Camber Mill. The Quiet Thyme is family friendly, so many nights will find men, women and children enjoying a good meal, fine drink and lively conversation. Singing often erupts spontaneously and all conversation will stop so that more voices can be added to the chorus. Even though Camber Mill does not lay along heavily-used trade routes, some caravan masters will take a detour in order to enjoy the tavern's fare. With this in mind, Duncan and Hilda have considered expanding the tavern to include a second floor. By doing so, they can convert the tavern into an inn. Until then, the couple invites weary travelers to spread out bedrolls in the stable out back.

Prices at the Quiet Thyme are modest. A tankard of ale costs 1 cp and wine 2 cp. A meal with generous portions is 3 cp.



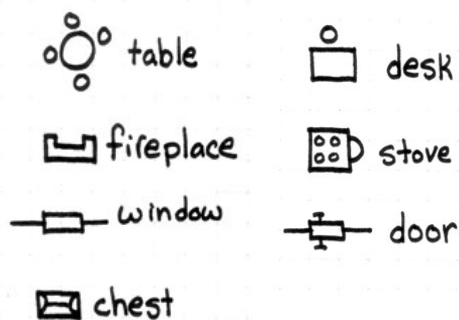
Key

1 square = 5'

a) Main Room

b) Kitchen

c) Office



The Quiet Thyme

Superior Masonry Walls: 1' thick, Break DC 35, Hardness 8, Hit Points 180 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck16/Locked 18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked18.

Duncan, male human Com3; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 190 lbs); CR 1; HD 3d4; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +1;

Melee: Dagger +1 (1d4, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12 (+1), Wis 13 (+1), Cha 12 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +5, Sense Motive +5, Intimidate +2, Listen +5, Profession (barkeep) +10, Spot +5; Negotiator, Skill Focus (barkeep), Toughness.

Possessions: Dagger, pouch with 2 gp, 8 sp, 10 cp, keys to office chest and tavern doors.

Hilda, female human Com2; Medium humanoid (5' 5", 150 lbs); CR 1/2 ; HD 2d4+2; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +0;

Melee: Rolling pin +1 (1d4, x2).

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Craft (sewing) +3, Profession (cook) +8, Listen +2, Spot +2; Iron Will, Skill Focus (cook).

Possessions: Recipe book, keys to tavern.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

The seasonal changes here in So. Cal. are subtle, but they do occur. I'm hopeful that the shorter days of Fall and Winter give me some extra time indoors to do lots of writing. There are plenty of topics that I want to cover; I just need the time to do so. In other news, I think I've improved the quality of the podcast recording, thanks to a filter between me and the mic. Basically, I hold up a wire mesh strainer so as to not overload the mic when I say words that have the "p" sound. Hooray for cheap fixes to nagging problems!

Until next time, Christian

Hildebrand's Tome

exploring the freelands of mirrym
by liz rich

Written by the mad wizard Hildebrand five years after the founding of the Freecity of Mirrym, Hildebrand's Tome has appeared several times in the decades since. Containing relatively low-powered spells, it is the rumor surrounding its creation that makes this book so fascinating.

It is bound with the brightly colored feathers of a rare bird which is said to cause madness with the spreading of its wings. Furthermore, the tome's pages were made from the fibers of the bird's feathers. Not only containing spells, there are several pages of intricate lattice work designs and three blank pages. At one time there were four, but a previous owner scribbled in a dubious recipe of arcane origin and unknown purpose.

It is thought by a few scholars who have studied the tome (and retained their composure) that the lattice work designs on the book are really maps to the lost library of Hildebrand the Mad, which vanished shortly before his death. Researchers would eagerly pay to possess this book, which was last seen in the hands of an infamous sorceress by the name of Madelyn. It disappeared shortly before she began her quest for the Hope Chest, and no one has managed to locate it again.



The feathers adorning the cover of the book are arranged in such a way that they retain a vestige of their former power to addle minds. When the book is viewed, a DC 10 Will check is required. If the check fails, roll a d4 and consult the results below.

1. Subject stares into space for d10 rounds, mesmerized. They will mumble to themselves and drool a bit.
2. Everything around the subject is gut-busting hilarious. The victim will laugh themselves sick for d6 rounds. (Great fun in a serious wizards' library.)
3. Inspired by the pretty feathers, the reader begins flapping their arms and running around the room in an attempt to take flight. This spectacle will go on for d6 rounds.
4. Convinced that everyone is "out to get them," the subject flees at their maximum move, then hides. This effect will last for d10 rounds.

Hildebrand's Tome will contain five 1st level spells, two 2nd level spells and one 3rd level spell.

Hidden Message

exploring the freelands of mirrym

Before leaving her master's tower for the last time, the self-serving Madelyn managed to steal a spellbook. Her mentor could have retrieved the book with little effort, but he thought it best to let the infraction pass. After all, the truly dangerous spells were safely hidden, so there was little harm his impudent apprentice could do. Besides, it was time one of his old tomes saw the light of day. Furthermore, the book would be one less thing his new apprentice would have to dust.

A few months after Madelyn's theft, a few spells from the stolen spellbook began to surface at the hidden bazaars and secret places where wizards trade arcane knowledge. The spell below is a sample from the book.

Hidden Message

Enchantment:

Level: Sor/Wiz 1; Bard 1

Components: V/S

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Touch

Target: 1 living creature

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes

By means of this spell, a willing subject is able to carry a message in their mind that is unknown even to themselves. Before casting the spell, the information must be given to the messenger along with a trigger. For example, "When you meet Archbishop Loren, recite the following message: The Old Kingdom is planning to move against your charge, Lady Leandra."

In this example, it would be wise to give such instructions only to one thoroughly familiar with the Archbishop, since the trigger is based upon the perceptions of the messenger. Because of this, the spell cannot be used to detect, say, Doppelgangers. For example, if the messenger were taken in by a clever "Doppelganger Archbishop," the spell would still be triggered. A more prudent trigger might include the messenger to ask for a "secret word." After setting the trigger, the spell is cast, then the information is hidden deep within the subject's memory. The recipient will be aware that they are carrying a message and that a spell has been cast, they just don't remember what it was! Please note that the message can be no longer than 50 words.

No amount of torture can force the messenger to reveal the hidden message. However, the enchantment can be dispelled by the original caster, or through the use of *Dispel Magic*. Dispelling the enchantment will allow the messenger to recall the message, thus making him susceptible to "coercive" means of interrogation.

Furthermore, the spell has unlimited duration, which means that the message could be hidden away forever if the subject is unable to unlock it. Using the above example, if Archbishop Loren were to suddenly become a missing person, the message could not be unlocked because the subject was never able to stand before him.

The DM may choose to create a higher level version of the spell that hides both a message in the subject's mind, in addition to causing them to forget that they are carrying a message in the first place. Such a spell might lend itself to an adventure involving an NPC who is hunted down for the information he unwittingly carries.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

A wizardess by the name of Madelyn has been mentioned in recent issues, so I thought I'd finally get around to writing her stat block, as well as scribbling a map to her home. I've even got a brief story about what happened when the characters in one of my old campaigns encountered Madelyn.

Until next time, Christian

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"In a world dominated by men, a woman needs an edge sharper than steel. She needs magic."
Madelyn

Madelyn is a talented wizardess, who currently lives in the town of Holsinger on Streele. She studied under a capable, yet eccentric, master for several years before striking out on her own.

Madelyn is rather attractive, yet anyone who spends time with her quickly becomes aware of her numerous personality flaws. Chief among them is a self-preservation instinct that causes Madelyn to manipulate others for her own benefit. Incredibly greedy, Madelyn feels that wealth is the only way to secure lasting happiness. To this end, Madelyn relies heavily upon her skills as a seductress and magician to get what she wants.

Rumors circulating in the wizard community indicate that Madelyn is currently associated with a thieves' guild. This is entirely possible, given Madelyn's taste for wealth and magical items. It is also said that she is trying to sell spells from a spellbook she stole from her master. (See Iridia 28.)

In combat, Madelyn supports only herself and rarely uses her spells to benefit her allies. In fact, flight is almost always her first option. If cornered, Madelyn will utilize her numerous enchantment and illusion spells to make her escape.



Philip Kightlinger illustration

Madelyn, female human Wiz4; Medium humanoid (5' 6", 110 lbs); CR 4; HD 4d4; hp 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +1;

Melee: Dagger +1 (+2 BAB, -1 str) (d4-1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1*, Ref +2*, Will +6*.

Abilities: Str 9 (-1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 10, Int 16 (+3), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 16 (+3).

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic, Dwarven.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +3, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +4; Brew Potion, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Spells (4/4/3; save DC 13* + spell level, 0% arcane spell failure chance): 0-Daze x2, Detect Magic, Light; 1-Charm Person, Hypnotism, Magic Missile, Sleep; 2-Daze Monster, Tasha's Hideous Laughter, Invisibility.

*Add +1 to DC for enchantment spells.

Possessions: Elixir of Love, Cloak of Resistance +1, scroll with Feather Fall and Mage Armor, spellbook with all memorized spells including Identify and Read Magic, dagger, 20 gp.

* Add +1 to saves if Madelyn is wearing her Cloak of Resistance.

Madelyn's Home

exploring the freelands of mirrym

On the corner of Wagon Street and Lamplighter Way stands a modest, single story home. The faded paint and always-closed shutters do not give the home an inviting exterior, which is exactly the way the occupant likes it.

a) Living Room

The living area is rather spartan, containing a table, a few chairs and a fireplace. Because Madelyn is affiliated with the local thieves' guild, a few rogues can occasionally be found lounging here. Madelyn flirts with them all equally, leading them on, hoping to use their affection for her own gain.

b) Office

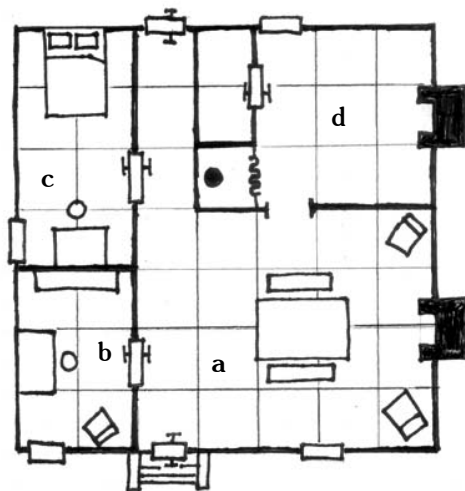
Madelyn keeps her personal papers and books here. A quick search will yield her spellbook, another magical text called Hildebrand's Tome (see Iridia 28) and two books on the creation and use of poisons. (Each is worth 30 gp.) Madelyn is interested in the subject and is considering using poisons against her enemies. The room is furnished with a desk, bookshelf and padded chair.

c) Bedroom

Fine black linens on a large, four poster bed, candles and slinky garments left on the floor catch the viewer's eye. In the top drawer of her bureau, which is locked (Open Lock DC 20), Madelyn has hidden a ledger that contains a detailed roster of the local thieves' guild. It includes membership, safe houses and a list of bribed officials. Madelyn hopes to sell it some day to the highest bidder.

d) Kitchen

The kitchen is seldom used, although Madelyn is thinking about using it to practice brewing poisons. The house's latrine is accessed via a curtain near the pantry.



one square = 5'



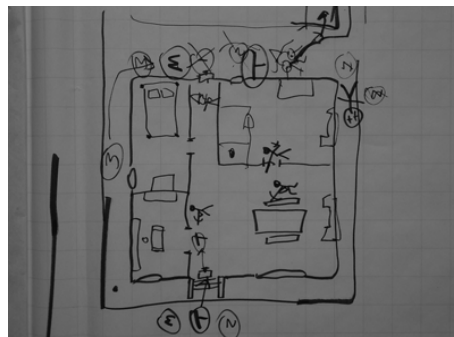
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Madelyn's House

Wood Walls: 6" thick, Break DC 20, Hardness 5, Hit Points 60 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18.



In my own campaign, the party stormed Madelyn's home in an attempt to bring her to justice for some burglaries she was involved in. The group met stiff resistance from 3 rogues lounging in her living room. Madelyn was also present, but managed to escape out the back. Above is a photo of the battle mat.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

In the last issue I wrote about Madelyn, so I decided to present the man who finally brought her to justice. I've also included a stat block and a map to his home. I don't think it's possible to have too many maps and stats!

Also, I apologize for the long, long wait between issues. My wedding and honeymoon took me away from my computer for quite a while. Furthermore, I've been spending a lot of time in the water, so I haven't had a lot of free time. I'm hoping to get back into the swing of things, though.

Until next time, Christian

Faces in the Crowd

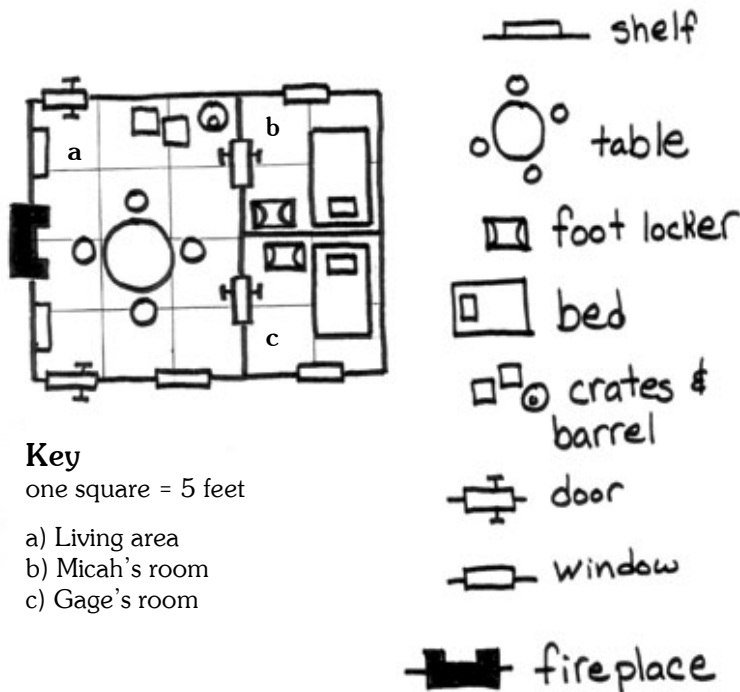
exploring the freelands of mirrym

"Follow my rules and nothing bad will happen to you...maybe."

Micah, road warden

Micah lives just outside the thriving town of Holsinger on Streele, where he works as Captain of the Road Wardens. As a road warden, it is his job to ensure the roads in and around the town are kept clear of bandits and beasts. He coordinates the activities of 20 other warriors, who do their best to control the chaotic caravan traffic that flows in and out of the Dragon Run Mountains.

Holsinger on Streele is a wealthy community due to the lucrative trade it controls with the numerous dwarven forges located in the mountains. In exchange for dwarven gold, silver and iron ore, the humans trade meat, timber and



Micah's Cottage

Wood Walls: 6" thick, Break DC 20, Hardness 5, Hit Points 60 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck16/Locked18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck16/Locked18.

other agricultural goods not found within the mountains. That kind of trade attracts all sorts of bandits, so Micah and his wardens are always busy.

Micah is generous to a fault and always gives quarter to enemies who ask for it. He trains his men well, aware that they have families at home who depend upon them.

In the past, Micah has engaged in heated debates with corrupt town officials. This is the main reason Micah lives outside of Holsinger's walls. He wants nothing to do with political scheming. In fact, Micah assumed control of the road wardens after he ousted the previous captain, who had grown complacent and morally bankrupt.

Micah is always looking for decent, hard-fighting men to join the ranks of the wardens. The pay is not great, but there is a pension and salaries are often supplemented by selling the arms and armor of vanquished foes.

Additional Notes

Micah was a character played by my friend, Todd M., during my Freelands of Mirrym campaign. This campaign was run several years ago - in 2003, I think.

During the course of the campaign, he crossed paths with Madelyn. (See Iridia 29) I don't recall the specifics, but I think she was linked to a thieves' guild that had orchestrated multiple caravan raids. Micah and the fellow party members had raided Madelyn's home, but she managed to escape. Eventually, though, Micah cornered her as she was skulking around his cottage and cut her down. It was a rather anti-climatic end to a hated villain, but at least she was finally brought to justice.

Eventually, Micah took a young warrior under his wing. The exact details escape me, but I believe his name was Gage and he was most likely from the town of Holsinger. In the campaign the PCs trained quite a few NPCs. I kind of liked casting the characters in the role of seasoned veterans who led less experienced warriors into battle.

Micah's stat block appears above. I get terribly confused when running NPCs with multiple attacks, so I've expanded the attacks section to detail each weapon.

Micah, male human Rgr6; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 180 lbs); CR 6; HD 6d8+12; hp 40; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AL CG;

Armor: AC 17 (+3 dex, +4 chain shirt), touch 13, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +6/+1, Grp +9;

Melee: Longsword +11 (+6 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword) (d8+4, 19-20/x2);

Full Round: 4 attacks as follows:

Primary hand:

Longsword +9 (+6 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword, -2 two weapon penalty) (d8+4, 19-20/x2);

Longsword +4 (+1 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword, -2 two weapon penalty) (d8+4, 19-20/x2);

Off hand:

Shortsword +9 (+6 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 short sword, -2 two weapon penalty) (d6+2, 19-20/x2);

Shortsword +6 (+6 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 short sword, -5 for second off hand attack) (d6+2, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Longbow +10 (+6 BAB, +3 dex, +1 mw longbow) (d8, x3);

Full Round: +10/+5 longbow (+6/+1 BAB, +3 dex, +1 mw longbow) (d8, x3).

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 16 (+3), Con 15 (+2), Int 12 (+1), Wis 13 (+1), Cha 13 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +6, Heal +6, Hide +6*, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +6*, Ride +9, Search +6, Spot +7, Survival +7, Swim +6*; Cleave, Endurance, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Mounted Combat, Track, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (Shortsword).

* apply a -2 penalty due to armor

Spells (0/2; save DC 11 + spell level): 1-*Endure Elements*, *Entangle*.

Ranger Abilities: Favored Enemies (Ex): Humanoid (human) (+4 to damage rolls) and Dragon (+2 to damage rolls), Wild Empathy (Ex), Animal Companion (Ex).

Possessions: +1 longsword, +1 shortsword, masterwork chain shirt, masterwork longbow, potion of *cure moderate wounds*, 50 gp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

On a recent day off, I decided to head out for an early surf session. It was 7:30 am and the streets were fairly deserted. As I was passing through an intersection, an uninsured driver ran a red light and smashed into my truck. I didn't get to surf that day, nor for several days thereafter while I nursed a sore back, neck and general anxiety.

I've been meaning to play test the vehicle rules for Star Frontiers for some time and the car accident kind of inspired me to take a look. According to the rules, I think I took 4d10 points of damage. (1d10 of damage per 20 meters/turn of vehicle speed) In light of the fact I was feeling pretty worked for several days, I think I rolled a 5, 4, 3 and 7 for a total of 19 points of damage. The rules say that skeinsuits absorb half of the damage in a crash, so perhaps I'll wear my wetsuit the next time I drive to the beach.

In other news, I have Skype up and running. I purchased a web cam, so I'm all set for video chat. I think it'd be a lot of fun to talk with Iridia's readers about the zine, or perhaps we could game online with the help of an application called Screen Monkey. If you're interested, my user name is Jhaevin. Hit me up!

Until next time, Christian



My ground car got thrashed.

The Ink Bug

gurps 4e

This is a small, mobile robot that can print or draw on paper or other suitable surfaces. Ink Bugs are a common substitute for computer printers when only a few pages must be printed, but a printer would be too large. An Ink Bug receives data from a nearby computer via radio or infrared, but it can also store the equivalent of 20 pages (double for ever TL above 8) and print them when a tiny button is pressed, or when it is placed on paper. This is very practical for standard forms and contracts; businessmen and civil servants may carry several Ink Bugs instead of an attaché case full of forms.

An early TL8 Ink Bug costs \$50, is roughly the size of a palm and moves on wheels or legs. It has sufficient sensor capacity to recognize paper sizes and to format correctly, but is easily confused by non-standard paper sizes and types (vellum, alien paper, etc.). It prints about one page per minute in black or white at 600dpi.

A late TL8 Ink Bug is the size of a walnut shell and can be disguised as a brooch or other piece of jewelry (egyptian scarab replicas are always in fashion). It prints two pages per minute and does very well with odd paper sizes and types as long as the software tells it what to do. Cost is \$40. It can print color very well and its resolution is about 1200dpi.

A TL9 Ink Bug does not get much smaller, but it imitates handwriting rather well. It costs \$30 and prints three pages per minute. Forgers often use TL9 Ink Bugs to imitate another person's handwriting. Most commercial Ink Bugs have a precise, steady writing that can be recognized as the work of an Ink Bug with a cursory analysis (though not with the naked eye). However, some models are very sophisticated and resist all attempts to detect the forgery with a skill level of 12. These models of Ink Bugs cost \$300 at least and are often illegal. A good forgery also requires samples of writing and analysis equipment.

Stirge

gurps 4e

"Aieee! Get it off me! Get it off me!"

Unfortunate victim of a stirge attack

Stirges are bat-like creatures that feed on the blood of living beings. While just one poses little danger to most adventurers, multiple stirges can be a formidable threat. In combat, a stirge attacks by landing on a victim, then plunging its proboscis into the flesh.

A stirge's coloration ranges from rust-red to reddish-brown, with a dirty yellow underside. The 10" long proboscis is pink at the tip, fading to gray at its base. A stirge's body is about 18" long, with a wingspan of about 3 feet.

Stirge (11 points)

SM -2 (3' wide, 18 lbs.);

ST 5 [-50], DX 15 [100], IQ 4 [-120], HT 11 [10];

HP 7 [4], Will 10 [30], Per 10 [30], FP 12 [3];

Basic Speed 6.5, Basic Move 2 (ground), 12 (air);

Dodge 9 (in flight), Parry -, Block -;

DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Flight (winged -25%; air move 12) [30], Night Vision 5 [5], Striker (cannot parry, -40%) [3], Vampiric Bite [30].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bloodlust [-10], No Fine Manipulators [-30], Wild Animal [-30].

Skills

Brawling-17 [4], Stealth-15 [2].

Attacks

Proboscis-17: 1d-3 pi, reach C, no parry.

Upon a successful grappling attack (using the brawling skill), the stirge is able to land on the victim and grabs hold with its claws. (The victim is at -4 DX after being successfully grappled.) The following turn, if it is still attached, it plunges its proboscis into the flesh using an All Out Attack. If the attack is successful and penetrates the victim's DR, see below.

Blood Drain: If the proboscis penetrates the victim's DR, the stirge drains 1 HP per second until dislodged. For every 3 HP stolen, the stirge heals either 1 HP or 1 FP. The stirge cannot raise HP or FP above normal this way. A stirge is vulnerable when feeding in this manner and will be unable to dodge any attack directed at it. However, a missed attack or excess damage may wound the stirge's victim!



*Illustration from the 1e AD&D
Dungeon Masters Guide*

The War of the Dragon Queen expansion for the D&D miniatures line features a stirge. (fig. #56) It is an uncommon figure and is selling for \$6 + S/H on EBay. That seems like a lot for a small piece of painted plastic.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I tried very hard to publish Iridia weekly, but I think I bit off a little more than I could chew. Therefore, I'm going to abandon the weekly publication schedule. I imagine that I'll still be able to send out 2-3 issues per month, so it's not like I'm giving up all together.

I've been really excited about getting back into gaming. I've long thought about getting a campaign started, but I figure it's finally time to just do it. I posted an ad in a few forums and am hoping to receive some positive responses. While planning for my new game, I happened upon an episode of Dexter's Lab called "D&DD." If you search YouTube, I think you can find it. It was such a funny cartoon and really inspired me to put an old school hack and slash game together.

In this issue you'll find a spot of fiction that I really enjoy. It's short, but very well done. On the back page there's a new NPC from my old Freelands of Mirrym campaign.

If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to download Skype and Screen Monkey from NBOS software (nbos.com), then hit me up for some online gaming. My Skype username is Jhaevin.

Until next time, Christian

Waterseeker

by steve honeywell

The waterseeker and his apprentice crested a dune and looked out over the expanse of desert. Ahead of them lay miles of bare, shifting dunes like the previous miles they had trekked across. No plants, no animals. Just sand and endless, cloudless blue sky.

"There's no water here, Master," the apprentice said. He sat down on the dune, and the sand shifted beneath him.

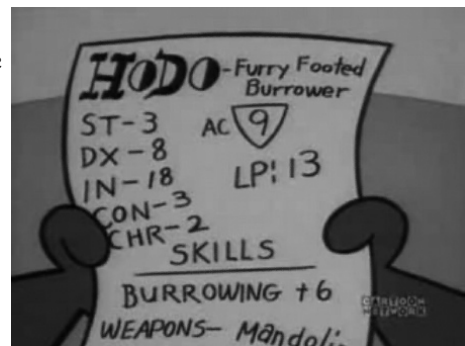
"Hush, Fassim. Let me think." The old man reached into a pouch on his belt and removed a small fetish. He held it above his head and chanted, his voice rising and falling in the wind. Behind him, on the dune, Fassim watched carefully. In a few years, he might have to perform this same ritual.

After several minutes, the old man stopped and regarded Fassim out of the corner of his eye. The boy still watched him intently. The old man sighed and returned the fetish to the pouch. "There is no water," he said. "You know what must be done."

Fassim nodded and stood. He walked to the waterseeker and put a hand on the old man's shoulder. "I know, but I don't like it."

"You're ready. I will tell you everything you must do. Take a minute and prepare yourself."

Fassim sat cross-legged. Hands on knees, he stared out into the sand. He'd prepared for this moment since the waterseeker took him on as apprentice. When no water could be found, the waterseeker gave his life for the tribe. A spell implanted in his body would create a spring upon his death, and the clan would live on. Just as he would sacrifice his master today, years hence his own apprentice would doubtless perform this



Episode description: "Dexter's playing a tabletop role-playing game, Monsters and Mazes, with some of his geek friends, but they don't seem too happy with his overly-competitive style of game mastering. Dee Dee (Dexter's sister) is invited to play and is even made Game Master despite Dexter's protests. As Dexter watches in horror, reduced to a mere player character (and not even a ridiculously high-powered one like he's used to), Dee Dee turns his dark and dreadful game into something a lot more light-hearted...not to mention more fun."

same ritual.

Behind him, the waterseeker prepared. He removed the materials he needed from the pouch and laid them on the dune in front of him. A knife, a short rope, a small skin of water. He was ready. He selected the rope and walked behind his apprentice.

Without a word, he threw the rope around the boy's neck and pulled it tight. Fassim struggled, but years of surviving the harsh environment had made the old man strong. A minute later, Fassim slumped to the sand.

The old man dragged the body back to his tools and discarded the rope. He took the knife, steeled himself, and plunged it into his own heart. The shock of the blow caused him to freeze for a second, then his instincts took over. He forced the knife through his ribcage, shattering it and collapsed to the sand.

A moment passed.

From the cut, a small creature emerged and crawled to Fassim's body. Eyeless, legless, it wriggled to the young man's corpse and slithered into the mouth. A few moments later, Fassim's body sat up. It was nice to be in a young body again. He'd been just quick enough; the body would live again, and the boy's mind had been erased. Sad, but necessary. Fassim had been pleasant enough, if a bit dull. Still, the boy's wife was something to look forward to. He forced the body to smile, getting used to his new surroundings.

Fassim (he forced himself to use the new name) worked quickly, slitting open his old body from neck to groin, the wiping the knife clean on the sand. He poured the skin of water into the cut. The spell that would destroy his old body and create the spring would take the rest of the day, and the rest of the tribe would find him a day after that. The clan would live on.

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"Is that the best pick up line you could come up with? Seriously, how dumb are you? Now just drink your ale and shut up."

Marilyn

Marilyn is the reserved, often callous, serving maiden of the Quiet Thyme tavern in the village of Camber Mill. (See Iridia 29) The main reason for Marilyn's perpetually foul mood is that she could think of many places she'd rather be. Literate and fluent in three languages, thanks to her mother, Marilyn dreams of leaving Camber Mill to become a researcher or sage in the Freecity of Mirrym. For now, however, she is needed at home to care for her ailing mother.

Moreover, her younger brother Fletcher is having a tough time in life, so Marilyn feels it is her duty as his older sister to help him find his path. Until the day she is able to pursue her own dreams, she will work hard at the tavern and remain on the look out for rare books and scrolls that travelers often share with her.

During play, Marilyn could be used as a love interest or potential apprentice for a wizard character.

Note: See Iridia 15 for Shepard, another NPC who frequents the Quiet Thyme tavern.

Marilyn, female human Com1; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 125 lbs); CR 1/4 ; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp +0;

Melee: Unarmed strike (1d3-1 subdual).

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14 (+2), Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarven.

Skills and Feats: Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (geography) +4, Swim +1, Listen +2, Profession (domestic) +2; Great Fortitude, Iron Will.

Possessions: A few old scrolls and tomes given to her by adventurers.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Hello and welcome to the first issue of Iridia for 2007. It's been a while since I've written, but the holidays had me very, very busy. I went to Mexico for sun and surf, spent time in the South with relatives and I even found time to squeeze in a flu.

In gaming news, I've managed to start a new D&D 3.5 campaign. You can track our progress at IridiaZine.net/mirrym.htm if you are so inclined. This campaign is the first time I've ever played without my lifelong friends, so it's something of a new experience for me. Fortunately, I've managed to find a nice group of fellows who are very skilled with the rules. They really keep me on my toes. ;) In this issue I'd like to share a few bits from our recent sessions.

Until next time, Christian

The Bone Saw

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"It's time for the big dog to eat."

Lazarus Ewell as he unsheathes the Bone Saw

Stalking the Freelands with a band of soldiers in tow is a nasty mercenary by the name of Lazarus Ewell. Lazarus is a formidable fighter in his own right, but his infamous bastard sword strikes fear in the hearts of his enemies. Lazarus claims the sword was revealed to him in a vision as he prayed to an obscure war god. (Some have suggested the deity is actually a demonic patron.) Whatever the blade's origins, its presence on the battlefield has caused many good-aligned warriors to flee before it.

The Bone Saw, +3 Unholy Bastard Sword of Wounding

Moderate Evocation [evil]; Caster Level: 21st; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Unholy Blight*, *Mordenkainen's Sword*, creator must be evil; Market Price: 98,335 gp; Cost to Create: 49,168 gp + 3,934 xp; Time to Create: 99 days.

Weapon Notes:

Unholy: The sword inflicts +2d6 points of bonus unholy (evil) damage against all of good alignment. It bestows one negative level on any good creature attempting to wield it, although the loss is recovered as soon as the weapon is relinquished. (See DMG page 226 for more information.)

Wounding: A wound inflicted by the Bone Saw deals 1 point of Constitution damage from blood loss. A critical hit does not multiply Constitution damage. Creatures immune to critical hits (such as plants and constructs) are immune to the Constitution damage dealt by this weapon. (See DMG page 226 for more information.)

The Goblin Cave

exploring the freelands of mirrym

Throughout the Freelands, small groups of goblin warriors have been slipping into human occupied areas. Their goal is to mass in secluded places for a sneak attack upon unsuspecting towns and villages. To facilitate this, goblin rogues have scouted ahead to find caves and sheltered spots where the marauding humanoids might rest during their journey to a rallying point. One such place is presented below.

a) Sentry

A lone goblin waits at the bottom of the natural staircase. If he senses an intrusion, he will shout an alarm to the goblins in area b. He will do his best to hold off intruders by lobbing javelins up the stairs. (He has three of them leaning against the wall.)

b) Intersection

Three goblins rest in this area. They pass the time by sleeping, drinking, sharpening their weapons and praying to their god, Maglubiyet. If an alarm is sounded, or if they are attacked, they will call out for reinforcements. Their preferred tactic is to form a defensive line, throw javelins, then draw short swords.

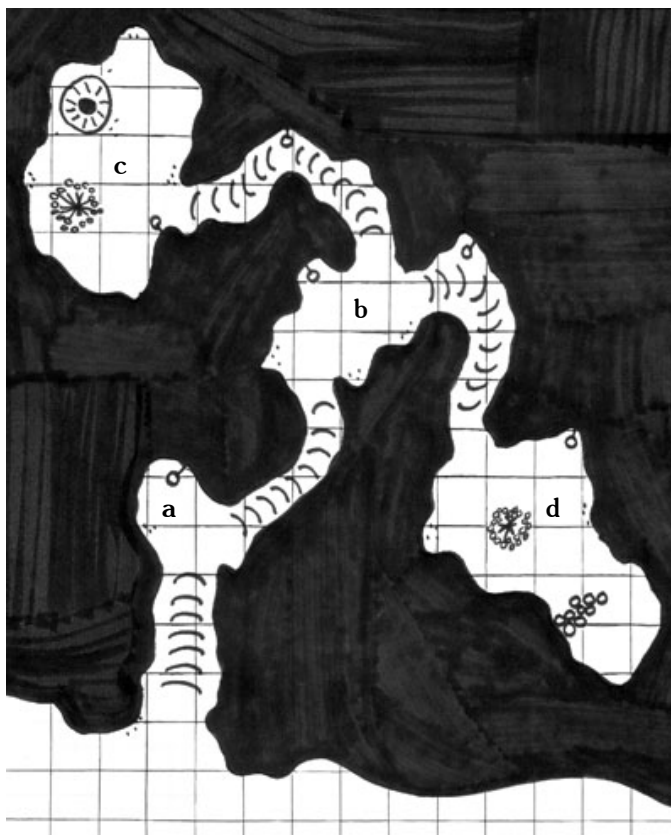
c) Mated Pair

A mated pair of goblins rest here. They rut like mad most of the time, lending a foul, sweaty odor to the chamber. If the cave complex is attacked, they will charge up the stairs to area b in a wild frenzy. If one of the pair is killed, the surviving goblin will gain a +2 morale bonus as it attempts to avenge the death of its mate.

d) Main Cave

This large cavern is used by four goblins. They roast rats over the fire and drink deeply from earthenware jugs. If the caves are attacked, they will form a line behind the fire, then hurl javelins at the first enemy to step into the chamber. Resting behind a low stone wall in the southeast corner is the goblins' leader. He is unconscious (-4 hp) as a result of a wound he suffered when the goblins were ambushed by a human ranger two days ago. At the time of ambush, the goblins counted 20 in their war party. The ranger managed to slay 9 before the rest escaped and sought shelter in this cave. The goblins are not sure what to do with their leader.

The leader has a map that indicates the location of the rallying point for the goblins. Such information would be extremely valuable to the communities the goblins plan on attacking.



Goblin (11), male War1; Small humanoid (Goblinoid); CR 1/3; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 15 (+1 size, +1 dex, +2 leather armor, +1 light shield), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp -3;

Melee: Shortsword +2 (1d4, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Javelin +3 (1d4).

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60'.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 10, Wis 9 (-1), Cha 6 (-2).

Languages: Goblin, Orc.

Skills and Feats: Hide +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Ride +4, Spot +2; Alertness.

Possessions: Rat jerky, wineskin, d4 cp, 1 sp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I haven't read Dragon in a long time. I'm not sure why, exactly. I used to read it faithfully every month for nearly 10 years straight. Part of the reason, I think, is that I've never fully acclimated to D&D 3.5. That sounds strange, I know. I play the game and I write about it, but I guess I've never been comfortable with the prestige classes and emphasis on high level play. Nevertheless, I recently picked up Dragon #351 and found a few things that really sparked my interest. Items so interesting, in fact, that I decided to share one with you. On the back page is an NPC I wrote for GURPS. His name is Sheridan and I think he could be used in a modern, fantasy or sci-fi setting. As always, hit me up at Christian@IridiaZine.net if you have any questions or comments.

Until next time, Christian

Defiler

d&d 3.5

TSR used to publish a campaign setting called Dark Sun, which was set in the world of Athas. Athas is a blasted, desert setting where wizards (called Defilers) have destroyed all plant life as a side effect of their spell casting. The inhabitants of Athas consumed most of their natural resources long ago and are forced to use weapons crafted from bone and rock. When the setting was first published, I didn't think much of it. I guess I was really into the traditional orcs and elves style of play at the time. After reading an article in Dragon #351, however, I'm really thinking about picking up some Dark Sun material on EBay.

The article presented a feat for Dark Sun called Defiler, but I really think it could be used in any milieu. Basically, Defiler allows a wizard to boost the power of his spells at the expense of nearby plant life. A group of selfish wizards reducing lush forests to ash in order to empower their spells would make great villains!

Defiler

You can power your spells using energy stolen from plants around you.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast 1st-level arcane spells.

Benefit: You may draw the life force from plants around you in an act known as defiling. Casting a spell with defiling magic increases the caster level of the spell by +1. A spell cast with defiling magic takes longer to cast. If the spell's casting time is a standard action or less, its casting time increases to 1 round. If the spell's casting time is measured in rounds, its casting time is increased by 1 round. If the spell's casting time is measured in minutes, its time increases by 1 minute. If the spell's casting time is measured in hours, its casting time increases by one hour.

You may only use defiling magic to enhance arcane spells cast with an arcane spellcasting class. You cannot, for example, use defiling magic to cast a cleric's domain spell that also appears on an arcane spellcasting class' spell list.

When you defile, you instantly destroy all plant life (but not plant creatures) in a radius of 5 feet per level of the spell. A 0-level spell defiles a single 5-foot square. The defiled area becomes completely sterile and can never again support life. Only a carefully worded *miracle* can reverse this permanent sterility.

In an area without plant life (such as an area in which you already used defiler magic once before), any spell you cast with defiling magic fails and you lose that spell.

Special: You cannot cast arcane spells on Athas unless you possess this feat, even if you intend on never defiling. Wizards native to Athas gain this feat as a bonus feat when they gain their first level of wizard.

Sheridan

gurps 4e

"Not all of the criminals out here want to kill you. Some just want your skin."

Sheridan isn't a bad man, he's just a bit lazy. He wandered extensively in his younger days, hoping to strike it rich without actually having to strain himself. Eventually, Sheridan ended up getting arrested for vagrancy. He was branded with a "V" on his right forearm, then exiled. Expelled into the wild with other condemned men, Sheridan learned to either work or die.

Sheridan managed to befriend a dozen or so non-violent criminals. They banded together for mutual support and now spend their time maintaining the defenses of the camp in which they live. He dreams of returning home, but he knows it's futile. The walls that surround his homeland are 40 feet high and the guards who patrol them shoot anything that approaches.

The wild lands where Sheridan lives are home to fierce animals and dangerous sub-humans. If that weren't bad enough, more violent criminals often raid the camp where Sheridan and the more passive exiles live. Many of the dangerous convicts have serious mental illnesses and life in the wild has caused them to grow increasingly unstable. Sheridan worries that it's only a matter of time before the camp is overrun. He hopes and prays that his luck will turn and that relief will come. Until then, there are trenches to dig, fires to tend and food to be gathered.

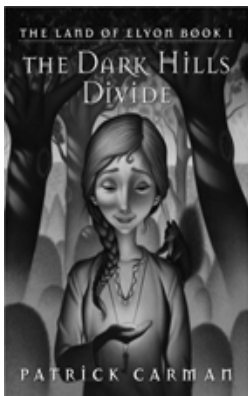
Using Sheridan In Play

There are some who believe that exile is a rather harsh sentence. This is especially true given the fact that the prisoners often turn upon on another and that many of the exiles are not equipped to deal with living in a brutal environment. The people who argue for reforms in the law are correct to wonder why a petty crime, like vagrancy, is punished with a potential death sentence.

Characters might be hired to smuggle supplies, medicine and letters from relatives to the exiled prisoners. The party would have to be very careful, since being caught could very well result in the characters being exiled as well. In the wild, the party would have to defend themselves from attacks by the more violent exiles, as well as fend off wild animals.

Conversely, characters might be hired by city officials to survey the criminal camps, determine the prisoners'

relative health and organization and then report on their findings. It's possible the exiles have organized themselves into a rag tag army and plan on attacking the society that treated them so cruelly. It'd be up to the party to pacify the exiles.



Sheridan and a band of exiled convicts living on the fringes of civilization were inspired by Patrick Carman's Dark Hills Divide.

Sheridan (-5 points)

SM 0 (5' 8" tall, 155 lbs.);
ST 11 [10], DX 10, IQ 11 [20], HT 11 [10];
HP 11, Will 9 [-10], Per 11, FP 11;
Basic Lift 24, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+1;
Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry (see attacks), Block -
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Less Sleep 1 [2].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Social Stigma (criminal record) [-5], Status -2 [-10], Wealth (dead broke) [-25].

Skills

Camouflage-12 [2], Gardening-12 [2], Melee Weapon (broadsword)-9 [1].

Attacks

Light Club-9, 1d+2 sw/cr or 1d thr/cr, reach 1, parry 7.

Equipment

Tattered clothing, waterskin, club.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Sometimes I flip through my rulebooks and see a feat, skill or spell that really inspires me. In this issue I'd like to present an NPC named Tabitha who has the ability to read minds. The things she learns might provide adventure hooks for player characters. I really wish I had an art credit for the artwork I used to represent Tabitha. I found the image on Elfwood about five or six years ago and never bothered to jot down the artist's name. I'm reluctant to use it, so here's hoping the artist doesn't mind. I've also decided to bring back the Iron Rations series of articles. It's been a while since the Basic D&D heroes have appeared in this zine. Check out issues 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12 and 14 for more Basic D&D material.

Until next time, Christian

Iron Rations

basic d&d

In the back alleys of a city called Haldane, Devon and his companions searched for a renegade cleric named Gareth. Gareth claimed to be the loyal servant of a forgotten demigod of the crows, a god called M'kai. Gareth preached that the crow god was furious because he had been forsaken by his followers and was committed to reclaiming the skies. Gareth warned that any who failed to worship M'kai would have their eyes torn from their sockets.

Devon and his friends had been hired by city officials to track Gareth down after attempts to do so by the watch had failed. When they finally encountered Gareth in an abandoned warehouse, he was naked save for a robe of feathers. Filthy and crazed, Gareth began calling to his god for aid as dozens of crows flapped their wings and cawed loudly.

At the top of his lungs Gareth screeched, "Do you think you can harm me? Fools! I serve M'kai the sky god and he will tear your flesh to ribbons!"

Abel Artone nervously drew his sword, scarcely able to comprehend the sight before him. "Seriously, Devon. This guy is freaking nuts."

As he fumbled for an arrow, Devon replied, "I know, Abel. How about we let Aithne take him?"

"Agreed," said Abel. "I don't want to tangle with this guy. Not even a little."

With that said, Abel and Devon backed away, dragging the speechless Apris with them. Aithne simply shook her head at her friends' reaction, then stepped forward to ready a spell.



Gareth, Level 3 Cleric; Alignment: Chaotic; Abilities: Str 11, Int 11, Wis 14 (+1 on magic-based saving throws), Dex 13 (+1 to hit with missile weapons, -1 AC bonus, +1 initiative bonus), Con 11, Ch 10; AC: 10; Hit Dice: 2; Hit Points: 12; Attacks: dagger (1d4) Move: 120'; Spells: Cure Light Wounds, Cause Light Wounds; Languages: Common; Possessions: 10 gp, 20 sp tucked under a pile of crow feathers.

Tabitha

gurps 4e

Tabitha has the ability to read minds. She simply focuses intently on an individual and within a few moments, thoughts and images begin to fill her mind. When she is finished reading someone, she snaps a photo of them with her camera phone and jots down a few notes into her journal. When she returns home, she uploads the photo to her blog, as well as a description of the person's thoughts and where she saw them. Because Tabitha is an aspiring screen-play writer, readers of her blog assume she's working on a new character idea for a movie.

Tabitha has found that most people's thoughts are consumed with rather mundane worries and concerns. However, every once in a while she reads a mind and finds something truly horrific. Once, she tried to go to the authorities after reading the thoughts of a man who had raped his date the previous night after drugging her. Tabitha showed the man's photo to the police, but since she wasn't able to explain how she knew he had committed a crime, she was turned away.

Tabitha went to a friend who proofreads her screenplays for advice on what to do. Surprisingly, he was able to introduce her to some people skilled at taking care of problems outside normal, legal channels. Relieved, Tabitha now feels she has a resource to rely upon when she reads someone with a dark secret.

Using Tabitha In Play

The characters in your campaign could be the people that Tabitha turns to for help. She could also be a useful contact if they need someone to be scanned. Eventually Tabitha's blog might be discovered by someone who realizes her character sketches aren't fictitious. They could threaten to expose Tabitha, or they might even kidnap her for some devious purpose. Who knows what agencies might attempt to exploit her?



Tabitha (44 points)

SM 0 (5' 4" tall, 102 lbs.);
ST 9 [-10], DX 11 [20], IQ 11 [20], HT 10;
HP 9, Will 11, Per 11, FP 10;
Basic Lift 16, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d-1;
Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Attractive [4], Fashion Sense [5], Mind Reading [30].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Nosy [-1], Odious Personal Habit (takes candid photos of strangers) [-5], Secret (utter rejection) [-10], Skinny [-5], Wealth (struggling) [-10].

Skills

Computer Operation-11 [1], Driving (automobile)-11 [2], Writing-12 [4].

Attacks

Punch-11, 1d-3 cr, reach C, parry 8.

Equipment

Camera phone, laptop computer, 2001 Toyota Corolla.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I keep my personal copies of Iridia in a binder that I reference when I'm gaming or working on an issue. As I'm doing so, I sometimes notice typos and formatting errors. When I find a mistake, I update the original MS Publisher file, then upload a revised .pdf to the website. Eventually, I hope to publish an edited, typo-free collection every 50 issues. I think it'd be a handy gaming supplement.

While writing the stat block for John Toppe's NPC (see back page), I was reminded of how much I like rogues. Rogue-based campaigns are a lot of fun and I've been fortunate to GM a few. I'm really inspired to write some urban material, so be on the look out for some rogue vs. city watch articles. Gavin Light, who was introduced in Iridia 13, is back. I know it will never happen, but I'd really like to play a military-style Star Frontiers campaign someday. This new installment of "A Life Among the Stars" describes the set-up I'd most likely use. If I don't get distracted, I'd like to present a few mission scenarios in future issues.

Until next time, Christian

A Life Among the Stars

star frontiers

"I think I should have stayed in prison."

Gavin Light of the Groth Defense Force

Two weeks after Gavin Light arrived on Groth, the Sathar invaded.

The Sathar were careful not to provoke a nuclear response from the Dralasites. They did so by striking quickly with devastating conventional weapons, then rapidly deploying their infantry within the ruined population centers. If the Dralasites used nukes, they would have been killing their own citizens, not that there were many left.

The Sathar initially used EMP weapons to knock out sensitive electronic equipment, then leveled cities with powerful fuel-air explosives. The fuel-air explosives annihilated the population by dispersing a large cloud of combustible vapor above a target. The vapor, once ignited by a secondary explosion, created a titanic blast. The resulting shockwave blew buildings to rubble and shredded flesh. Those who survived were suffocated as the air rushed from their bodies to fill the void created by the conflagration.

When the Sathar jumped into orbit, Gavin was able to find shelter in an underground, airtight bunker. He emerged after the attack to see Sathar assault landers touching down in the smoking ruins. Like any citizen of the Frontier, he knew that the Sathar were vicious killers. They would offer no quarter, so Gavin quickly armed himself and took cover. In the following weeks, Gavin managed to link up with a few other human and Dralasite survivors.

Together, they offer a stubborn resistance until the United Planetary Federation reinforcements arrive...if they arrive. Four weeks have passed and the Sathar still roam the ruins of Groth. Gavin and his companions are starting to wonder if they're on their own. Time will tell.



Very little is known about the Sathar, other than their thirst for conquest.

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

by john toppe

"You'll never catch me if you insist on remaining two steps behind."

Kel Darbec

Kel's life began in the town of Holsinger on Streele. When Kel was still a young boy, his father was killed by passing bandits. A few years after that, Kel's mother and both his brothers died when a plague swept through the town, leaving Kel in the care of an overcrowded orphanage. The orphanage was run by well-meaning clerics, but the numerous conflicts in the area and periodic waves of contagion overwhelmed their capacity to offer proper care to the young children there. Because he was smaller than the other children his age, Kel was often picked on and suffered beatings at the hands of the bigger boys.

This slowly came to an end as Kel began stealing things from the orphanage and framing the bullies for the crimes. Soon Kel's tormentors were gone, and Kel had learned that he had a great talent for stealing. Any one could take things by brute force; only a truly clever man could take something without its owner knowing for hours or even days. And that meant a much smaller chance of being caught.

By age 14, Kel left the orphanage (with a few choice items stolen from the clerics) to see the world, and find where the real money was - the big city. He headed to the Freecity of Mirrym and discovered what it meant to be a small fish in a very large pond. Not only did he need to watch out for the city guard, but there were numerous other thieves already established there, and they were not looking for competition. After a number of attempts on his life from rivals in the city, Kel went back to an old trick; he started framing others for his own crimes. Through careful bribes Kel made sure that several of his adversaries met with "accidents" while in jail, so allowing Kel's power to grow.

A ruthless man with many schemes for his own enrichment and the downfall of his rivals, Kel has quietly worked Mirrym for many years. His success is due to recognizing the right kinds of things to steal. The mayor was not going to report that his bribe money was suddenly gone. His fellow thieves also make for excellent targets, as well as wonderful challenges for his crafty mind. Though growing older, Kel is still as clever and ruthless as ever.

Kel Darbec, male human Rog6; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 140 lbs); CR 6; HD 6d6; hp 21; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 16 (+2 dex, +4 leather armor +2), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +4, Grp +4;
Melee: Shortsword +6 (+4 BAB, +2 dex) (d6, x2/19-20).

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15 (+2), Con 11, Int 16 (+3), Wis 15 (+2), Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +11, Disable Device +11, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +12, Gather Information +10, Hide +12, Knowledge (local - freecity of mirrym) +12, Listen +11, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +11, Search +11, Spot +11; Blind Fight, Combat Expertise, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse.

Special Abilities: Sneak Attack +3d6, Trap Sense +2, Evasion, Trapfinding, Uncanny Dodge.

Possessions: Masterwork shortsword, leather armor +2, potion of invisibility, potion of spider climb, potion of cure light wounds, potion of darkness, 5 x 20 gp gems, 80 gp.



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Iridia

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On Point

I thought I'd share some more material from an old campaign. This time around I'd like to present the town of Holsinger on Streele. I think that it's generic enough for the map and background to be used in almost any campaign setting. I have fond memories of the place and miss gaming with the players who helped make it come alive. On a final note, I've noticed an increase in the downloads of the current and back issues from the Iridia website. As I'm writing this (January 21), there have been 300 downloads for the month. It makes me very happy to share my gaming material with others. Many thanks for the support!

Until next time, Christian

Holsinger on Streele

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"Not even dishonesty can tarnish the shine of profit."

Gabriel, caravan master

Holsinger on Streele lays in the foothills of the Dragon Run mountains. It is a wealthy community due to a lucrative trade with the numerous dwarven forges found in the highlands above. In exchange for dwarven gold, silver and iron ore, the humans trade meat, timber and other agricultural goods not found within the mountains. Such wealth attracts ruthless bandits and inspires intense greed.



Peter Lustig illustration

Holsinger on Streele was founded 250 years ago by explorers looking for a quiet land to settle. They had fled a war-torn homeland and found the fertile plains around the Streele River to their liking. While traveling north along the Streele River Valley from the coast, the explorers were frequently attacked by native humanoid tribes. Along the way a particularly valiant warrior, Footman Holsinger, was slain while defending his liege. His surviving companions named the town they eventually founded after him. Within a few years of settling the area, the dwarves in the mountains above made contact with the humans. The dwarves helped the humans to survey their town and very quickly a prosperous trade had developed.

Holsinger's wealth has created envious neighbors. Chief among these is the town of Venable, which actively seeks to penetrate the lucrative trade routes. Holsinger aggressively resists these efforts and pitched battles between the two towns are common. With all the violence swirling around Holsinger, the town leadership works very hard to ensure safety within the walls.

Holsinger on Streele is an ideal destination for those seeking to make their fortune. Cunning and strength are required, however, because the competition is stiff and outsiders are not always welcome. The various neighborhoods, or wards, of Holsinger are briefly detailed below.

Town Neighborhoods

Holsinger is divided into six neighborhoods, or wards. No walls or other clear divisions separate the wards, but the quality and character of each neighborhood is apparent as one passes through. The town is patrolled by a watch numbering 50 individuals. It generally takes them 2d10 minutes to respond to a disturbance.

East Gate

This is a chaotic area where people push and shove to make their way into town. It's always crowded, with numerous pubs ready to quench travelers' thirst.

Trades Ward

Free standing warehouses, provisioners and workshops dominate this borough. There are always people working and hustling, even at late hours. A few cheap inns cater to caravan employees and do a brisk business as a result.

North Village

Successful artisans, scholars and traders live here in well-maintained row houses. There are also a few free-standing homes with private gardens. A handful of pleasant inns with attached stables can be found here as well.

River Run

The town's elite live here in free-standing homes of high quality. The area is quiet, well-lit and frequently patrolled. One can also find specialty boutiques that cater to refined tastes.

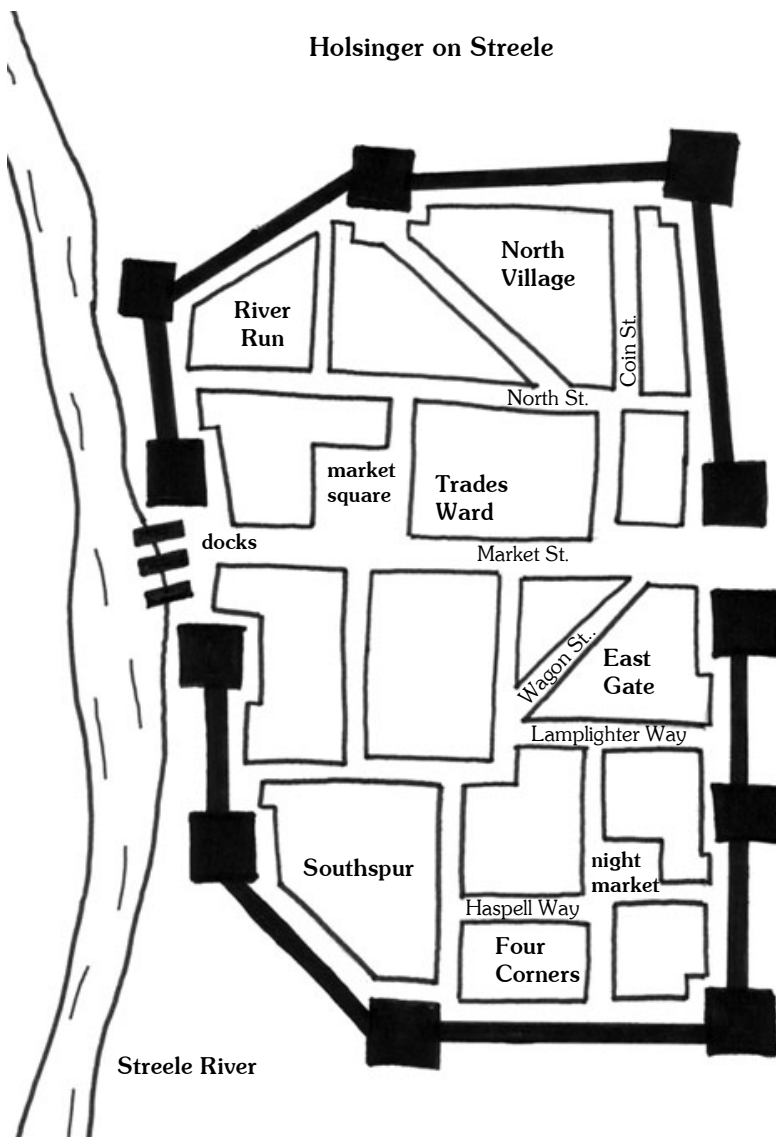
Southspur

This is a rough neighborhood that houses the town's dyers, perfumeries and tanneries. Those who live here are poor and often surly from having to endure the putrid stench.

Four Corners

This is an out-of-the-way neighborhood where proud blue collar families maintain modest row houses. There are a few reasonably priced inns, as well as small shops that sell foodstuffs. A few abandoned warehouses have been converted into lofts by struggling artisans. The night market is a romantic square where teenagers and lovers gather to socialize.

Holsinger on Streele



Holsinger on Streele (large town): Conventional; AL LG; 5,000 gp limit; Assets 1,200,000 gp; Population 4,900; Mixed (human 99%, dwarf 1%).

Authority Figures: Mayor Hamilton, Exp5, LG; Gordon Reeve - Captain of the Watch, Ftr5, LG; Damon Pettigrew - Captain of the Garrison, Ftr5, LG; Micah - Captain of the Road Wardens, Rgr6, CG.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

From 1997-98 I ran a GURPS campaign that lasted nearly 30 sessions. It was fantasy in essence, but the addition of mecha, time travel, cloning technology and alien invaders from another dimension gave the sessions a pretty weird flavor. Fun, but strange. The goblins in this issue are one of the more tame elements from the game. They were inspired by the goblins from SJG's Fantasy Folk. I tried to convert them to D&D 3.0 a few years back, but they just weren't the same. I think they came out pretty well this time around. Enjoy.

Until next time, Christian

Goblin

gurps 4e

art by david brackney

"There's no glory in slaying goblins."

Bastion, mercenary captain

Goblins are good-natured creatures, with an affinity for nature and a fondness for magic. Always eager to make new friends, they are far better neighbors than their more fearsome cousins, the hobgoblins.

Three to four-feet tall, goblins have long noses, large ears and wide mouths perfect for goofy grins. Their skin color ranges from light to dark green, with rust-colored eyes. Simple homespun garments comprise their attire, with earth tones figuring prominently. Goblins responsible for protecting their clan wear scavenged bits of armor they tailor to suit their frame.

Goblins are timid and only enter combat if they, or their families, are threatened. When attacked, a goblin's first impulse is to flee. In some cases, a few brave souls will employ spears and slings in an attempt to deter pursuers.

Goblins demonstrate a remarkable affinity for agriculture and are able to grow crops in the poorest of soil. They also possess the ability to soothe and domesticate wild beasts. There are many tales of goblins that befriended fierce animals after removing thorns from paws, or after extracting a cracked, or abscessed, fang. As a result, goblin clans will always live with at least one animal companion, such as a bear or wolf.

Due to their small size and rather modest intellect, goblins are awed by magic and physical prowess. If a goblin encounters a band of good-natured adventurers, it might tag along, hoping to witness a display of magic or strength. Goblins will clap wildly if they see a spell cast, even going so far as to tug on their ears and stomp their feet.

Extremely resilient, goblins can be found in almost any climate and terrain. Their preference, however, is for lightly forested, rolling hills. In this type of environment goblins will build small huts, or dig caves, to house their large, extended families. Because of their gregarious nature, goblins are occasionally attracted to human settlements.



Goblins often appear unintelligent, or just plain ridiculous. However, a look into their eyes reveals an intelligence far greater than what they've led others to believe.

On the outskirts of human cities, goblins might band together in a collection of flimsy huts. The goblins make themselves useful to the humans by performing duties that most people find distasteful, tasks like waste disposal and pest control. Goblins have learned to politely ignore derogatory comments such as, "When you've finished removing the trash from the alley, make sure you throw yourself out as well."

In the urban environment goblins excel at stealth and making their way into forbidden places. Any breaking and entering a goblin commits is usually the result of an innate curiosity, or the simple desire to find a warm, cozy place to sleep. In the morning following a particularly cold night, people will be seen ousting goblins from their homes after finding them tucked away in closets, under beds, or curled up in front of hearths. Most folks have learned to take these intrusions in stride; it is generally considered poor form to harm goblin stowaways. When it comes to religion, goblins worship nature spirits.



While goblins never go looking for a fight, they do their best to defend their families and homes.

Goblin (27 points)

SM -1 (3' 6" tall, 50 lbs.);
ST 8 [-20], DX 12 [40], IQ 9 [-20], HT 10;
HP 8, Will 9, Per 11 [10], FP 10;
Basic Lift 12, Damage: Thr 1d-3/Sw 1d-2;
Basic Speed 5.5, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry (see attacks) , Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Animal Empathy [5], Flexibility [5], Night Vision 5 [5], Plant Empathy [5], Resistant to Disease (+8 to resist) [5], Talent - Animal Friend 2 [10], Talent - Green Thumb 2 [10].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Curious (9) [-7], Pacifism (self defense only) [-15], Poor [-15], Second Class Citizen (-1 to reaction rolls) [-5], Sense of Duty (animals) [-15], Ugly (-2 to reaction rolls) [-8].

Skills

Animal Handling (select animal type)-11 [2], Brawling-12 [1], Climbing-13 [4], Escape-10 [1], Farming-12 [4], Filch-12 [2], Gardening-12 [2], Melee Weapon (spear)-11 [1], Naturalist-11 [4], Professional Skill (rat catcher)-12 [2], Scrounging-12 [2], Sling-11 [2], Stealth-12 [2], Survival-11 [2], Urban Survival-11 [2], Veterinary-11 [4].

Attacks

Sling-11, 1d-2 pi, Acc 0, Range 48/80, RoF 1, Shots 1(2), Bulk -4;
Spear-11, 1d imp (two hands), Reach 1, 2, Parry 8.

Equipment

Sling (worn as a belt), rat jerky, \$1, lump of cheese.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I surf every day after work. It makes me happy and it's a great way to blow off steam. It's also a low cost hobby. Access to the ocean is free, my board is paid for and no one can stop me from going. I feel the same way about this zine. It's inexpensive to publish and it's fun to write. As I get older - and have had valuable things taken from me - I appreciate the simple pleasures more and more. Keep on gaming in a free world, folks. Send comments and questions to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"How does it feel to get beat up by a girl?"

Nicole

Nicole grew up in one of Mirrym's poorest neighborhoods. She saw many of her childhood friends wind up as prostitutes, trapped in abusive marriages, or worse. Nicole decided early on that she would answer to no one. However, since Nicole was lacking in education and financial resources, she had few options available to her. Over time, Nicole developed a nasty temper and a penchant for violence.

She eventually fell in with a crew of burglars and extortionists. Nicole and her associates do not belong to any of the Freecity's many thieves' guilds, preferring to keep all of the money they make for themselves. Nicole is especially adept at extorting money from shopkeepers. Her good looks initially put victims at ease, making them more amenable to her demands for protection money. If a shopkeeper protests, they are in for a terrible beating. Getting pummeled by a woman is something few victims are willing to admit, so they usually pay up.

In a campaign featuring good-aligned characters, Nicole and her crew might be targeted for arrest. Apprehending Nicole might prove to be a bit of a challenge, though. Several of her partners in crime are fiercely loyal and would be willing to fight hard to protect her. Conversely, rogue PCs might be sent by their guild master to eliminate Nicole and her group.

In combat, Nicole will always attempt to flee if outnumbered, or confronted with armed opponents. Because she prefers to fight with her fists, Nicole will goad attackers into dropping their weapons. She enjoys using Power Attack to deliver especially punishing blows.



Dan Smith illustration

Nicole, female human War2; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 145 lbs); CR 2; HD 2d8+4; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Aarmor: AC 12 (+2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +4;

Melee: Unarmed attack +4 (+2 BAB, +2 str) (d3+2).

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0.

Abilities: Str 14 (+2), Dex 14 (+2), Con 15 (+2), Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Gather Information +2, Hide +3, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local - freecity of mirrym) +1, Spot +1, Swim +4; Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack.

Possessions: 1 20 gp gem, 30 gp, 10 sp.

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

"Come on in, the magma's fine."
Gezcaral the Efreeti

I'd like to share a method I used to create a lava field. I think it's a great looking piece of inexpensive terrain. Best of all, it's very easy to make.

To begin with, I obtained three sheets of color butcher paper. (fig. 1) I was able to get the sheets from the workroom at my school, although anyone can purchase this kind of paper from teaching supply stores. I picked black for the solidified lava, red for lava that is cooling down and hardening, and yellow for hot, flowing lava. I also pulled out a sheet of 27" x 34" graph paper. (I talked about large sheets of 1" graph paper in Iridia 11.) I trimmed the colored sheets of butcher paper down to 27" x 34" to match the size of the graph paper.

Next, I cut out the black paper to form the top layer of the lava field. I decided to go with three areas of hardened lava. (fig. 2) I then laid it on top of the red sheet of craft paper. With a pencil, I drew a line 1" away from the edge of the black paper. This red strip represents a cooling band of lava. I then cut out the area I had delineated.

The yellow sheet of paper is the base. On top of it I laid the red I had just cut, then the black on top of that. (fig. 3) With Elmer's spray adhesive, I glued the layers together, one at a time. The spray glue is very, very sticky, so be careful.

Finally, I laid the 1" graph paper on top of the lava field. With a push pin, I perforated each of the vertices. (fig. 4) When I lifted the graph paper off of the lava field, I had a ready-for-battle piece of terrain, complete with a 1" grid.

To see a color version of this battle mat, please visit the following URL: www.IridiaZine.net/terrain/lava_mat.jpg

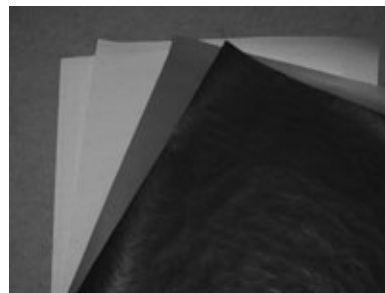


figure 1



figure 2

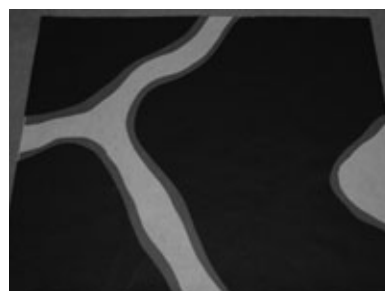


figure 3



A Fang Dragon awaits his next victim!



figure 4



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

On the back page of each issue of Iridia is a mailing address. One fellow in Germany took note of it and mailed me several copies of his print zine, Mond Buchstaben. Even though I am unable to read German, the zine is very cool. It's full of industry news and there seems to be a homebrew fantasy setting that is discussed every few issues or so. The author, Dirk Remmecke, indicated in his letter that publication of Mond Buchstaben has ceased, but he is thinking about a new zine project. I certainly hope so! In other news, I resurrected the terrain portion of the webpage at IridiaZine.net. I'm not sure why I ever deleted it, but it's nice to have it back.

Until next time, Christian



Mond
Buchstaben

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"The master bow maker's favorite form of punishment was push-ups. He said that either I'd be very good at making bows or very strong. Either way, he'd be happy. Fortunately for me, I turned out to be a little bit of both."

Fletcher

Fletcher grew up in the quiet village of Camber Mill. At an early age he demonstrated remarkable proficiency with the bow. He had hoped to become a master bow maker, but his apprenticeship ended prematurely and this causes him a great deal of anxiety.

The master bow maker's son resented Fletcher's skill and delighted in making his father's apprentice suffer. Eventually, Fletcher lost his temper and clobbered his master's son. While the master bow maker realized his son was a spoiled lay about, he had no choice but to eject Fletcher from his tutelage.

Fletcher is truly between a rock and a hard place. He must either find a new master and resume his training or be unable to ply his trade in any major town or city due to the exclusivity of the trade guilds. Barring that, he will have to work as a common laborer or enlist in a mercenary force as an archer. For the time being, he lives with his sister, Marilyn, and their ailing mother. (Please see Iridia 32 for a description of Marilyn.)

Fletcher would make an excellent hireling for a group of adventurers looking for additional missile support. Perhaps a ranger in the party could take Fletcher under his wing and provide the young man with valuable training. PCs who befriend Fletcher will find that he is modest, loyal and rather intolerant of bullies.

Fletcher, male human War1; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 155 lbs); CR 1/2; HD 1d8+1; hp 9; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 15 (+3 dex, +2 leather), touch 13, flat-footed 12.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +3;

Melee: Dagger +3 (+1 BAB, +2 str) (d4+2, 19 -20/x2);

Ranged: Short bow +5 (+1 BAB, +1 weapon focus, +3 dex) (d6, x3) [Add +1 to hit and damage on all attacks within 30 ft. due to Point Blank Shot].

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 14 (+2), Dex 16 (+3), Con 12 (+1), Int 13 (+1), Wis 9 (-1), Cha 13 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Craft (bow making) +3, Hide +4, Listen +1, Spot +1, Swim +2; Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (short bow).

Possessions: Leather armor, dagger, short bow, 24 arrows, 7 sp.

This, That and the Other Thing: Hiring Quirks

random tables for your game

In my campaigns I've always tried to provide the party with useful NPC companions. I guess it's one of the reasons why Iridia features so many low-level NPCs. Hirelings add an extra dimension to play, I think. It's fun to watch the PCs train, protect and deal with the hired help. Sometimes, though, it's hard to come up with distinct personalities for the NPCs. I know I am guilty of playing them without much distinction. To remedy this, I'd like to present a random table of personalities you can use to add some life to the henchmen and hirelings of your campaign.

- 1) This fellow incessantly critiques the party's battle-field performance. He offers all sorts of constructive criticism, such as "Perhaps you should try to get hit less." "You should be more accurate with your bow." is another one of his gems. If a character actually listens to the NPC's coaching, allow an occasional bonus to an attack roll.
- 2) Quite the zealot, this henchman is always proselytizing to the party. The NPC hopes to convert the characters to his faith and will preach about the virtues of his deity morning, noon and night. He will point out that all of the party's good fortune is due to his deity blessing the group. Conversely, any bad luck that befalls the party is because they have failed to embrace the "one true faith."
- 3) The henchman seems to have an aversion to crowds, in addition to a secret he's reluctant to share with the group. When the party enters any sort of settlement he will pull the hood of his cloak over his head and skulk in the shadows. Once indoors he will insist upon sitting with his back to a wall and will nervously watch anyone who walks through the door.
- 4) This hired hand is always drunk. The characters are never able to catch him in the act of drinking, nor are they able to find where he hides his hooch. A descriptive GM should play up the inebriation, having the NPC snooze through watches, or make lewd comments to high born ladies.
- 5) Always eager to renegotiate his salary, this hireling brings up his rate of pay at inappropriate moments. In the henchman's mind, tense parlay or the death of a PC are perfect opportunities to haggle for a few more silvers. Even if the party rewards his service with the occasional boon, he will still mope and whine about the party "holding out on him."
- 6) The henchman claims to have the ability to commune with the mystical spirit world. He frequently offers to read the PCs' fortunes and even pretends to speak with the dead. When a foe is killed in battle, the hireling looks skyward as if he can see their spirit departing for the afterlife. Also, he claims to sense spirit activity in certain areas and will warn the party about "hostile energies."
- 7) When combat breaks out, the hireling is nowhere to be found. No amount of calling the coward's name will bring him out of hiding. Not until the battle is over will the fellow emerge from cover. The vanishing act is rather impressive and sudden, almost like an innate magical ability...
- 8) Pain means nothing to this character. He has an amazing ability to withstand damage. No matter how serious his wounds, he will shrug off the injury and will insist upon fulfilling his duties. He expects others to have a high pain threshold and will often tease those who succumb to their wounds.



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Iridia

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On Point

Spring is on its way. Hooray! Although winters are very mild here in Los Angeles, I'm hoping to see an end to the cold weather, blustery winds and 57 degree water temp. Because it costs so much to live in this city, I think it should be 75 and sunny every day. Oh well.

For this issue I've resurrected my Winter War series. I've been wanting to write about Sir Loren, who was introduced in Iridia 8. In actual play, he was a darn fine soldier. Sadly, he was killed after following his commanding officer into a hopeless battle. My GURPS bestiary project continues on the back page. This time I crunched a stat block for an ogre. Its damage with the club is insane. Hit me up with any questions or comments you might have at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Faces on the Battlefield

a continuing chronicle of the winter war

"I am not ashamed to cry for the friends I have lost. My tears do not diminish my strength."

Sir Loren, Knight of Iridia and Defender of Brin

Loren knows that when he dies the paradise of Mount Celestia awaits. He will be reunited with his slain brother knights and he will no longer have to battle a relentless, undead foe night after night. Nevertheless, death is something not to be taken lightly.

Loren worries about the time of his passing. Will he die valiantly or will he be killed while groveling in the mud, pitiful and weak? How will his death effect his family? Even though he will have ascended to the heavens, his loved ones will grieve. And what of the young men he is training? Who will protect them while they hone their skills? Who will eventually lead them into battle?

Even though death brings certain benefits, Loren would rather win the war against the Necromancer Lords, return home and marry. Surely his fallen comrades on Mount Celestia can wait a little longer for him to join them.

To read more about the Knights of Iridia and their valiant stand against an undead host, please see issues 1, 3, 5, 8 and 10.

Sir Loren, male human Ftr7; Medium humanoid (5' 11", 200 lbs); CR 7; HD 7d10+21; hp 61; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 21 (+9 half plate +2, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 21.

Attacks: Base Atk +7/+2, Grp +10;

Melee: Longsword +12 (+7 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword +1) (d8+6, 19-20/x2);

Full Round: 2 attacks with longsword as follows:

Longsword +12 (+7 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword +1) (d8+6, 19-20/x2) and Longsword +7 (+2 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword +1) (d8+6, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +5.

Abilities: Str 17 (+3), Dex 12 (+1), Con 16 (+3), Int 11, Wis 13 (+1), Cha 14 (+2).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +7, Jump +6 (-2 in armor and shield), Ride +11, Swim +6 (-2 in armor and shield); Cleave, Great Cleave, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride By Attack, Weapon Focus (long sword), Weapon Specialization (long sword).

Possessions: +2 half-plate, heavy steel shield, +1 longsword, medium warhorse, 20 gp.

Ogre

gurps 4e

"I'm a smash you!"

Grabbock the ogre

Adult ogres stand 8 to 9 feet tall and weigh 600 to 650 pounds. Their skin color ranges from dull yellow to dull brown. Their clothing consists of poorly cured furs and hides, which add to their naturally repellent odor.

Ogres are bullies by nature and incredibly dim-witted. Although most ogres scrape out a meager existence on the fringes of society, some have found work as mercenaries in civilized lands. Such employment rarely lasts long, however, since ogres have a disturbing habit of eating the dead and dying.

In combat, ogres attack with little planning. They are content to charge into battle, screaming wildly. Not so dumb as to be suicidal, ogres will retreat if they are wounded severely.

Ogres' preferred habitats are mountainous regions or forested hills. They lack construction skills, so they are most often found in natural caves. Family groups will consist of 1 dominant male, 1-2 adult females, 1-2 adolescents and 1-3 young.

An ogre occupies a single hex.



David Hamilton illustration

Ogre (6 points)

SM +1 (8' tall, 650 lbs.);

ST 20 (size, -10%) [90], DX 10, IQ 8 [-40], HT 12 [20];

HP 20, Will 8, Per 8, FP 12;

Basic Lift 80, Damage: Thr 2d-1/Sw 3d+2;

Basic Speed 4.5 [-20], Basic Move 5 [+5];

Dodge 7, Parry (see attacks), Block -;

DR 2 (tough skin).

Advantages and Perks

Alcohol Tolerance [1], DR 2 (tough skin, -40%) [6], Hard to Kill 2 [4], Reduced Consumption 2 (cast-iron stomach, -50%) [2], Resistant to Disease (+8 to resist) [5], Sharp Teeth [1].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bad Temper (9) [-15], Bully (9) (-2 to reaction rolls) [-15], Gluttony (6) [-10], Hidebound [-5], Increased Consumption 2 [-10], Odious Racial Habit (almost no personal hygiene; -2 to reaction rolls) [-10], Odious Racial Habit (eats sentients; -3 to reaction rolls) [-15], Ugly (-2 to reaction rolls) [-8].

Skills

Brawling-12 [4], Melee Weapon (two-handed mace)-12 [8], Survival (mountain)-9 [4], Survival (woodlands)-9 [4].

Attacks

Punch-12, 2d cr, reach 1, parry 9;

Sharp Teeth-12, 2d cut, reach C;

Two-handed club-12, 3d+6 cr, reach 1,2, parry 9 (unready after use).

Equipment

Two-handed club, lump of moldy cheese, maggoty biscuit, \$2.



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Iridia

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On Point

I'm very excited to tell you about a new rpg zine written by Matt Borselli. It's called "One Thousand and One Nights and One Night" and judging by the preview issue, it looks pretty sweet. I really like the personal tone that Matt uses. When it comes to zines, the personality of the author can be just as compelling as the content. Do be sure to check it out at the following URL: <http://1001nightsand1night.110mb.com/>

In other news, I've been tweaking all of the GURPS stat blocks from past issues. I realized that they all lacked a DR component. I also noticed that some of the mental disadvantages didn't have a control number. Oops. As I close in on Iridia 50 and the ensuing compendium, I want to make sure that everything is nice and tight.

Until next time, Christian

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

My wife and I got lost while driving and ended up in the nearby city of Gardenia. We despaired at ever making our way back to civilization until we found Marukai (marukai.com), which is the equivalent of a Japanese 99¢ store. Hooray for a nifty shopping experience to take our minds off of the unfamiliar surroundings!

Whenever I go into stores I'm always on the hunt for anything that can be used for gaming. While sifting through a bargain bin full of knick knacks used to make a wee zen garden, I hit pay dirt. I managed to find a bunch of thatched roof huts and a well that would make an awesome halfling village. Best of all, each piece was only \$1.50. For just six dollars I now have a nifty battleground!

Just for fun, I wrote a stat block for some halfling commoners. Perhaps the PCs in your campaign could rescue them from marauding humanoids. I imagine that the three huts might house 7 adult halflings (4 male, 3 female). Perhaps there are a few children as well.

Halfling (7), male and female Com1; Small humanoid (Halfling); CR 1/4; HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AL Neutral Good;

Armor: AC 12 (+1 size, +1 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 11.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp -5;
Ranged: Sling +2 (1d3).

Special Qualities: +2 morale bonus on saving throws against fear.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 8 (-1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 12 (+1), Cha 11.

Languages: Common, Halfling.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Hide +6, Jump +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Profession (farmer) +5, Spot +2; Skill Focus (profession).

Possessions: Sling, 10 bullets, 5sp.



Goblins rampage through a peaceful halfling village

Giant

gurps 4e

"I thought I'd seen everything until I saw a man killed with a cow."

William of Aberdale, after an encounter with a giant

Giants combine great size with great strength, giving them an unparalleled ability to wreak destruction upon anyone or anything that gets in their way.

Giants have a reputation for crudeness and stupidity that is not underserved. They rely on their tremendous strength to solve problems, reasoning that any difficulty that won't succumb to brute force isn't worth worrying about. Giants usually subsist by hunting and raiding, taking what they like from creatures weaker than themselves.

Giants relish combat. They will often soften up foes with hurled rocks before charging into battle with a club. When fully enraged, they will pick up foes in a crushing grip, then pop them directly into their filthy mouths.

While most giants encountered are solitary wanderers, bands of giants are not unheard of. These bands are usually large, extended families consisting of 4-6 adult males, an equal number of adult females and 3-6 young. These clans will range far and wide in search of food.

A giant occupies a space 3 hexes in diameter.



Matthew Vasey illustration

Giant (71 points)

SM +4 (25' tall, 2,500 lbs.);

ST 40 (size, -40%) [180], DX 9 [-20], IQ 8 [-40], HT 12 [20];

HP 40, Will 8, Per 9 [5], FP 12;

Basic Lift 320, Damage: Thr 4d+1/Sw 7d-1;

Basic Speed 4.25 [-20], Basic Move 7 [+15];

Dodge 7, Parry (see attacks), Block -;

DR 2 (tough skin).

Advantages and Perks

Alcohol Tolerance [1], DR 2 (tough skin, -40%) [6], Fearlessness 7 [14], Hard to Kill 2 [4], Hard to Subdue 2 [4].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bad Temper (6) [-20], Bully (6) (-2 to reaction rolls) [-20], Frightens Animals [-10], Gluttony (6) [-10], Ham Fisted [-5], Hidebound [-5], Increased Consumption 2 [-10], Low TL 1 [-5], Odious Racial Habit (almost no personal hygiene; -2 to reaction rolls) [-10], Odious Racial Habit (eats sentients; -3 to reaction rolls) [-15], Ugly (-2 to reaction rolls) [-8].

Skills

Brawling-11 [4], Melee Weapon (broadsword)-10 [4], Survival (mountain)-10 [4], Survival (plains)-10 [4], Survival (woodlands)-10 [4], Throwing-10 [4].

Attacks

Punch-11, 4d cr, reach 3, parry 8;

Bite-11, 4d cr, reach C;

Club-10, 7d cr, reach 4, parry 8;

Thrown 100lb. rock-10, 4d+1 cr, Acc 0, Rng 40, RoF 1(2).

Equipment

Club, sack of food, an occasional cow slung over the shoulders. (In a pinch, it could be hurled as an improvised missile weapon. See the quote above.)



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Keller's Warehouse originally appeared in my old Scrollworks zine. In its original form, the article was several pages long. Space constraints have dictated that it be severely edited. That's okay, though, because I still think it provides a DM enough material to work with. Perhaps I'll do a follow-up article next week that includes the related stat blocks. I just never know who the PCs will try to kill next. ;)

Until next time, Christian

Keller's Warehouse

exploring the freelands of mirrym
concept by ian thompson

Small by the standards of most warehouses, Samuel Keller's business also differs in the type of items stored. Where most warehouses store large amounts of bulk goods relatively low in value on a per item basis, Samuel Keller (Ftr 5) offers customers a place to store their smaller, yet highly valuable goods. His reputation in the Freecity of Mirrym brings him both return business and new clients on a regular basis.

Building Overview

Keller's warehouse was built with security in mind. The walls are constructed with 1' thick stone, while heavy wooden beams support the roof. A set of double doors provides access to the warehouse. At night the doors are secured with a length of chain and a padlock. A wooden bar on the inside of the doors can be slid into place as well. This wooden bar cannot be displaced from the outside, forcing would-be intruders to batter down the doors if they wished to gain access through the front. Lanterns flank the double doors to keep the front of the warehouse brightly lit as a deterrent to loiterers.

There is a back door that can be used as an alternate entrance/exit for Keller and his guards. Like the double doors, the back door is secured at night with a wooden bar. Although there are windows in the warehouse, thieves would be unable to climb in due to the iron bars that cover them. The warehouse also features a small cellar that can only be accessed through Keller's office. It is used for storing small, high value items. Keller personally oversees the warehouse during the day with the help one guard (war2), who doubles as a laborer. At night a second guard (War3) remains within the warehouse. A wood-burning stove, table and chairs provide the night watchman some comforts of home.

Fees and Services

Although the main storage area is only 30' x 25' (see map on back page), the space generates a fair amount of income since Keller charges 5 gp per month for 5 square feet of storage space. Crates of elven wine, small chests filled with coins and other valuables, bolts of silk, tapestries and casks of halfling ale are stacked neatly. Currently, Keller is renting space to 15 customers. (The DM should feel free to designate which 15 squares on the warehouse floor are occupied.) The cellar beneath Keller's office is extremely secure. Keller charges 10 gp per month to store items here. A cell in the corner can be used to store live commodities.

The Warehouse in Play

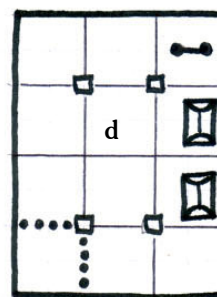
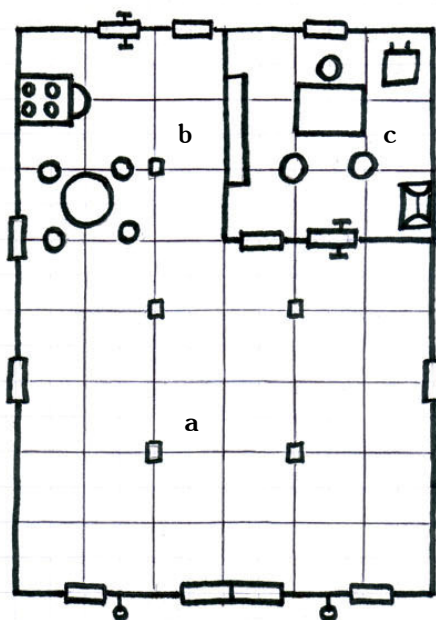
PCs can use the warehouse to stash treasure from a recent adventure. The DM could also place items here that rogue characters might like to steal. The DM should be creative when deciding what wondrous items are locked away in the caller. Perhaps a rare monster, prized for its potential use in a wizard's potion, is locked away?

Map to Keller's Warehouse

Key

One square = 5'

- a) Primary Storage Area
- b) Lounge
- c) Office
- a) Cellar



table



stove



desk

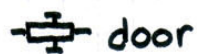
stool



trapdoor



lantern



door



ladder



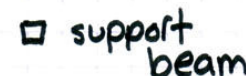
window



chest



bookshelf



support beam



bars

Keller's Warehouse

Superior Masonry Walls: 1' thick, Break DC 35, Hardness 8, Hit Points 180 (per 10x10 section);

Front Double Doors (good wooden doors): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18/Barred 25. At night the doors are secured from within with a wooden bar. Therefore, they must be battered down even if the padlock is picked;

Padlock on Front Double Doors: Hardness 15, Hit Points 30, Open Lock DC 20. A length of chain and a padlock secure the doors at night;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18/Barred 25, Open Lock DC 20. At night the door is secured from the inside with a wooden bar. Therefore, it must be battered down even if the door's lock is picked;

Windows: All of the windows are covered with iron bars. Hardness 15, Hit Points 30, Break DC 30;

Door to Samuel's Office (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18, Open Lock DC 20;

Trapdoor: The trapdoor in Samuel's office is secured with a padlock. Hardness 15, Hit Points 30, Open Lock DC 25.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I received an inspiring e-mail from an artist named John Bingham. John does illustrations for the Old School Reference & Index Compilation (OSRIC). I'd like to share with you something he wrote. "I just wanted to tell you that I checked out your zine for the first time today and am hooked. This kind of grass roots gaming support has always impressed me. I think because of zines like yours, the whole doom and gloom about the demise of table top gaming is a total fallacy."

I was so stoked to read this. I'm glad that Iridia is finding an audience! To the right is a description of the OSRIC project. Check it out at www.knights-n-knives.com/osric/

Until next time, Christian

OSRIC™ represents a compilation of rules for old school-style fantasy gaming. The book is intended to reproduce underlying rules used in the late 1970s to early 1980s, which being rules are not subject to copyright, without using any of the copyrighted "artistic presentation" originally used to convey those rules. In creating this new "artistic presentation," we have made use of the System Reference Document produced by Wizards of the Coast.

Letters Home

d&d

In an old campaign I suggested to my players that they might earn bonus experience awards if they wrote letters to their characters' families. While the extra XP bonus was the selling point, I was working a hidden agenda. My plan was three-fold:

- 1) Create a means by which the PCs might connect with the campaign setting via relatives.
- 2) Build an "authentic" history of the campaign. By authentic, I mean player-created material inspired by actual play, rather than me doing all of the work.
- 3) Use the letters to develop scenario seeds.

I decided that characters would earn bonus experience equal to 5% of the total award. The letters need not be long, but they should sum up the adventure, while providing some insight into a character's personality. A copy of the letter could be sent to the GM via e-mail to expedite the process. With the players' consent, the letters might be posted to a campaign website. Doing so would lend itself to a unique campaign history that the players would - no doubt - visit frequently.

Dear Father,

Things are so very hard. We were exploring some dwarven ruins in the Dragon Run mountains when we were attacked by a massive wyvern. It mauled Timothy from Camber Mill, tearing his throat out. I've never seen so much blood before. There was nothing we could do for him. I'm not sure that I'm cut out for this life.

*Your son,
Grant*

Letters can travel both ways. If the GM has the time, perhaps a letter from a relative would be in order. Occasionally, letters from a character's family might contain a compelling scenario seed.

Dear Son,

I think you may finally understand why I was so tough on you as a boy. I had to be hard because, well, life is hard. I wouldn't have been doing my job as father had I gone easy on you.

I look forward to your safe return. You know how I feel about your choice in "careers." I'd rather you return home to work as a road warden or constable. Brigands sponsored by Venable are attacking merchants from Holsinger on a daily basis. Brave, capable warriors are needed. Perhaps you and your comrades would be better off serving your community instead of hunting for lost treasure in abandoned mines.

*All my love,
Father*

The sending and receiving of letters may be a bit tricky. When sending letters to their family, the GM should provide the PCs with merchants who happen to be headed through their home village. Letters from family members might be sent to an inn the characters are known to frequent. Or, the PCs might have a base of operations, such as a keep or even a modest cottage.

However the writing and archival of letters is handled, they should add an interesting dimension to any campaign.

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym
concept by ian thompson
illustration by ed bourelle

"No one - and I mean no one - takes anything from me or from one of my clients. I've got three feet of steel and a bad temper that say so."

Samuel Keller

Samuel Keller is a veteran adventurer who appreciates honest, open dealings in all aspects of his life. Samuel is even-tempered and a very good judge of character. He will, under no circumstances, store goods that he believes may have been stolen or otherwise ill-gotten. A fighter by training, he carries himself with confidence and works hard.

Although he looks back fondly on his adventuring, he is very proud of the business he has founded and the service he

provides. Characters looking for safe storage may find an eager listener in Keller. Mind you, the players should be ready to listen to a few of Keller's own stories!



Samuel Keller's warehouse was presented in the previous issue of Iridia. (#43)

Samuel Keller, male human Ftr5; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 170 lbs); CR 5; HD 5d10+10; hp 40; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL LG; Armor: AC 15 (+1 dex, +4 mithril shirt), touch 11, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +5, Grp +6;
Melee: Longsword +10 (+5 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 mw longsword) (d8+5, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 13 (+1), Con 14 (+2), Int 13 (+1), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 13 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +5, Listen +3, Profession (warehouse owner) +6, Ride +5, Spot +3, Swim +6; Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: Mithril shirt, masterwork longsword, keys to warehouse, 3 x 50 gp gems, 25 gp gem, 10 gp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I'm excited about the release of 4e in May. I know that some folks are bothered, but I really can't muster any sort of indignation. It will be neat to see how Mike Mearls and his team have tweaked the game. I hope that the new rules inspire me to evolve my style a bit, to try and fit in with a new generation of gamers. It's not that I'm old or anything, but I do accept that my style needs some work. In light of the May 2008 release, I'm going to redouble my efforts to revise and republish as much of the old Scrollworks material as possible. I want to be ready with fresh content when the release date arrives.

Until next time, Christian

The Sleeping Sentry

exploring the freelands of mirrym
by michael hammes
art by christoffer saar

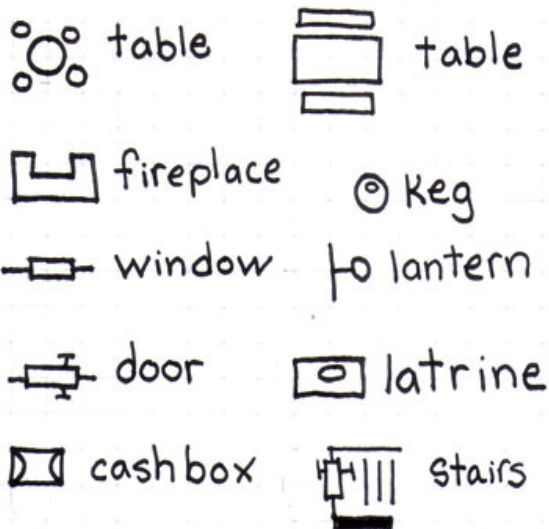
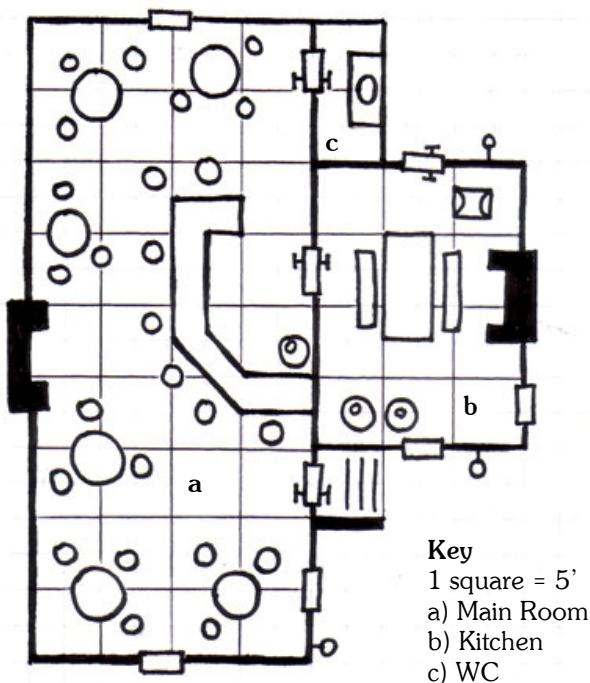
The Sleeping Sentry tavern sits within spitting distance of the central watch station in the Freecity of Mirrym. To many watchmen it is their second home, a place to get together with their fellows away from the citizens and relax in an atmosphere of camaraderie. With the ale flowing freely, the harried men and women that keep the Freecity safe can let down their guard and share the day's exploits in a convivial atmosphere.

Despite the occasionally coarse nature of its clientele, the Sleeping Sentry is one of the cleanest establishments in the city. The owner of the Sleeping Sentry, William Gale, is a retired Sergeant of the Watch. Owning the tavern has allowed William to stay in the familiar rhythms of being a watchman without actually having to endure the tediousness and occasional dangers of the job. William is an intimidating fellow, but those who know him well find that he is generous, loyal and always willing to help a comrade in need.

The Sleeping Sentry is probably the best source for any kind of rumors and news in Mirrym as watchmen from the ward stations make it a point to come to the tavern as often as possible. Thus it is a rare piece of gossip that cannot be obtained at the tavern. Unfortunately, the Sleeping Sentry caters to a rather restricted clientele. Strangers, whether locals or foreigners, are not exactly welcome. After all, this is a place where the watchmen go to get away from everyone else, so having everyone else come here is not something they appreciate. Those who wander in uninvited quickly find the eyes of a large number of uniformed troopers upon them. If that is not enough to turn them away, visitors notice that the boisterous noise they heard as they opened the door has been replaced by an uncomfortable silence. Any normal person would clearly understand that they are not welcome, so if they persist in remaining, William will firmly ask them to leave.

The tavern consists of the main room, a small water closet and a kitchen where a hired cook prepares warm meals for hungry watchmen.





The Sleeping Sentry

Superior Masonry Walls: 1' thick, Break DC 35, Hardness 8, Hit Points 180 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck16/Locked 18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked18.

William Gale, male human War5; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 165 lbs); CR 4; HD 5d8+13; hp 37; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +5, Grp +7;

Melee: Longsword +7 (+5 BAB, +2 str) (d8+2, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 11, Con 15 (+2), Int 12 (+1), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 14 (+2).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +9, Listen +5, Profession (tavern keeper) +3, Search +3, Spot +5, Swim +3; Alertness, Skill Focus (intimidate), Toughness.

Possessions: Longsword, keys to tavern, 10 gp in belt pouch and 20 gp and 60 sp in cash box.

Nina the Cook, female human Com2; Medium humanoid (5' 5", 150 lbs); CR 1/2 ; HD 2d4+2; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +0;

Melee: Rolling pin +1 (1d4, x2).

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Craft (sewing) +3, Profession (cook) +8, Listen +2, Spot +2; Iron Will, Skill Focus (cook).

Possessions: Recipe book, keys to tavern, 3 sp.



Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Have you checked out the vidcasts on the Iridia zine website? Frustrated by the feeble quality of the audio in my podcasts, I decided to go video. I've spent the summer making surf films (youtube.com/overheadmovies), so I decided to use my skills and equipment to make an Iridia vidcast. They still need some work, but it's coming along. As always, questions and comments can be sent to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

On Patrol In Venable

exploring the freelands of mirrym
art by jason fletcher

Venable's town watch is tasked with investigating crimes, apprehending criminals and generally keeping the peace. There are 41 full-time members of the watch serving a population of 4,000 citizens. Because Venable is situated along an important trade route, the population often swells as large caravans pass through. This only adds to the duties placed upon the shoulders of Venable's harried, yet capable, watchmen.

The basic unit of the town watch is the patrol, which consists of four members. The leader of the patrol is called the Watch Leader. She chooses the streets to be patrolled, coordinates the group in combat and makes the most important decisions. The second and third members of the patrol are called Watchmen. In their primary role as fighters, they generally employ at least one ranged weapon, pole arm or spear. The fourth member of the team is the Lantern Man. He manages the patrol's light source and often walks point down alleys and other dark places. During the day, the Lantern Man assumes the role of Watchman.

The patrols rely upon their authority and presence to coerce most ne'er-do-wells. Brute force is not their forte. If a patrol is faced with an overwhelming challenge, they will retreat. After doing so, the patrol will either seek assistance from other members of the town watch or will appeal to the town garrison for aid.

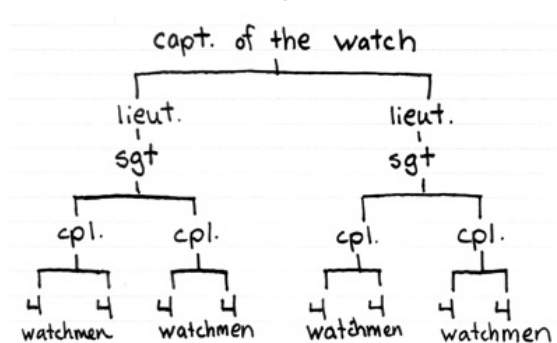
Watchmen earn 10 gp each month. Their training and equipment are provided at no cost and they can eat free meals at their headquarters. Wounded watchmen continue to draw their pay while recovering from wounds. If a watchman is killed while on duty, his/her spouse is paid a death benefit of 75 gp. On the following page are stat blocks for a typical patrol.



The Venable Town Watch

- 1 Watch Captain - Ftr6
- 2 Lieutenants - War2/Ftr3 or War2/Ftr4
- 2 Sergeants - War4 or War2/Ftr2
- 4 Corporals - War3 or War2/Ftr1
- 32 Watchmen - War1 or War2

Watch Organization



Patrol Leader, female human War2/Ftr1; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 135 lbs); CR 2; HD 2d8+2/1d10+1; hp 20; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AL LG;
Armor: AC 16 (+4 scale mail, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +4;
Melee: Longsword +5 (+3 BAB, +1 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+1, 19-20/x2).
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3.
Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 15 (+2), Con 13 (+1), Int 12 (+1), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 13 (+1).
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +3, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5; Alertness, Iron Will, Negotiator, Weapon Focus (longsword).
Possessions: Longsword, manacles, signal whistle, 5 sp.

Watchman with Spear and Shield, male human War2; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 170 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d8+7; hp 19; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 17 (+3 studded leather, +2 heavy wooden shield, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 15.
Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +5;
Melee: Shortspear +6 (+2 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus) (d6+3, x2);
Ranged: Shortspear +5 (+2 BAB, +2 dex, +1 weapon focus) (d6+3, x2).
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0.
Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 13 (+2), Con 14 (+2), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Climb +4 (+3 in armor, +1 in armor and shield), Intimidate +5, Spot +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (shortspear).
Possessions: Shortspear, heavy wooden shield, helmet, manacles, signal whistle, 3 sp.

Watchman with Crossbow, male human War1; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 155 lbs); CR 1/2; HD d8+1; hp 9; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;
Armor: AC 16 (+3 studded leather, +3 dex), touch 13, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2;
Melee: Dagger +2 (+1 BAB, +1 str) (d4+1, 19-20/x2);
Ranged: Light Crossbow +5* (+1 BAB, +3 dex, +1 weapon focus) (d8, 19-20/x2**).
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1.
Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 16 (+3), Con 12 (+1), Int 10, Wis 12 (+1), Cha 10.
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Climb +3 (+2 in armor), Hide +4 (+3 in armor), Listen +2, Spot +2; Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (light crossbow).
Possessions: Light crossbow, 20 bolts, dagger, helmet, manacles, signal whistle, 3 sp.

*+6 to hit targets within 30 feet.

**d8+1 damage to targets within 30 feet.

Lantern Man, male human War1; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 170 lbs); CR 1/2; HD d8+1; hp 9; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 14 (+3 studded leather, +1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 13.
Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2;
Melee: Shortspear +2 (+1 BAB, +1 str) (d6+1, x2);
Ranged: Shortspear +2 (+1 BAB, +1 dex) (d6+1, x2).
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2.
Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 13 (+1), Int 14 (+2), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 11.
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Gather Information +6, Listen +6, Search +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Investigator.
Possessions: Shortspear, hooded lantern, sun-rod, signal whistle, manacles, 3 sp.

The watch patrol presented above is an EL 3 encounter.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Iridia Compendium I will be released October 8. The compendium will consist of issues 1-49, with issue 50 being a comprehensive index. The compendium will be available for download as a .pdf. Print versions can be had for a small donation. They will be comb bound and will sport a cardstock cover.

Last week I presented a sample patrol of town watchmen. In this issue you'll read about their headquarters. You can drop it into your campaign, or simply use the map as a base for a mercenary group or some other organization. Let me know how it works out. Send e-mail to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

The Market Street Station

exploring the freelands of mirrym

The Market Street station can be found on the northern edge of the bustling central market in Venable. Its simple stone construction conveys order and strength. It is open all day and night, with watchmen and citizens coming and going in a steady stream. The keyed entries are described below.

a) Entry: Throughout the day and long into the evening, citizens clog this room in order to air all manner of grievances. A weary sergeant or corporal mans the desk, doing his best to keep the crowd calm.

b) Captain's Office: Captain Soren (Human, Ftr 6) works from this office. Much to his dismay, he doesn't get out into the field as often as he'd like. Endless meetings and paperwork seem to have him permanently pinned down.

c) Cells: Four cells house drunks and minor criminals. Anyone sentenced to a stay longer than a week are sent to the town's jail, which is located elsewhere. The heavy oak doors are secured with an iron bar. The cells are windowless and therefore stuffy. A chamber pot and straw mats are the only amenities.

d) Ready Room: Patrols use this room to put on armor, check their gear and receive final instructions. A trapdoor in the floor leads to a small cellar that's used for storage.

e) Meeting Room: This area is used for private meetings and interrogations.

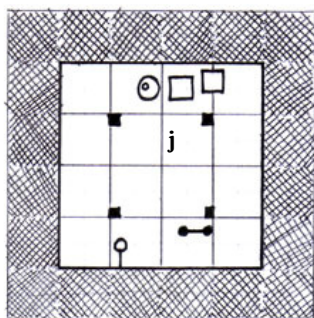
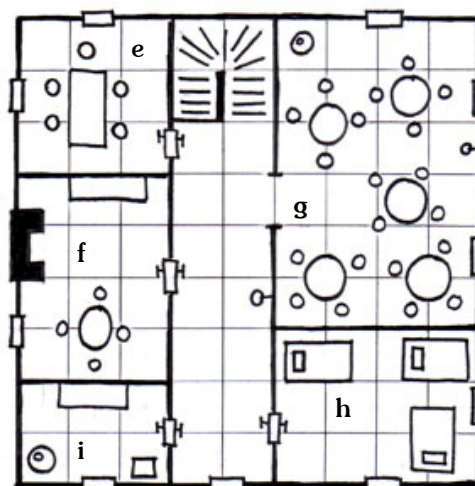
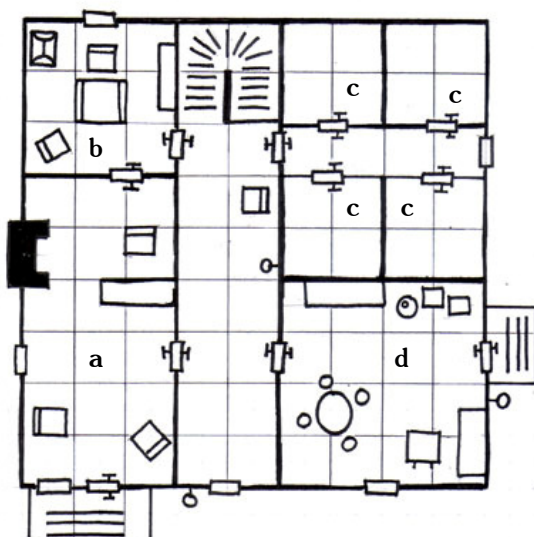
f) Kitchen: Well-fed watchmen are happy watchmen. At any hour of the day or night, a warm meal and a pint of ale can be had free of charge.

g) Staff Room: This room is used as a dining area and lounge. Staff meetings are held here as well.

h) Sleeping Quarters: Watchmen who work the graveyard shift often sleep here before or after their shifts. The bunks are also used by members of the watch who are down on their luck and need a place to stay. More than a few watchmen have had to move into the station after an angry spouse locked them out.

i) Storage: The maids that attend to the housekeeping store their cleaning supplies here. From time to time, the maids find a bottle of hooch stashed under the cleaning rags.

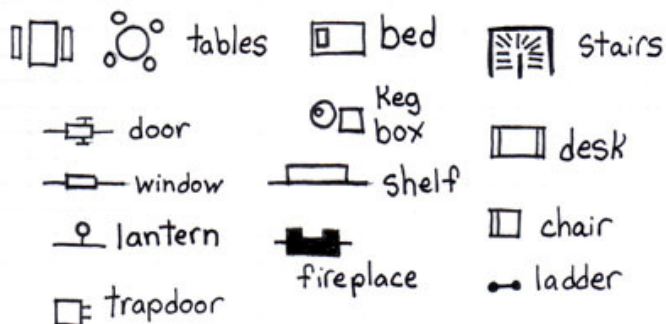
j) Cellar: As mentioned above, the cellar is used for storage. However, if the cells overflow, prisoners are sometimes stowed here.



Key

1 square = 5'

- a) Entry
- b) Captain Soren's Office
- c) Cells
- d) Ready Room
- e) Meeting Room
- f) Kitchen
- g) Staff Room
- h) Sleeping Quarters
- i) Storage
- j) Cellar



The Market Street Station

Superior Masonry Walls: 1' thick, Break DC 35, Hardness 8, Hit Points 180 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck16/Locked 18;

Side Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked18.

Cell Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC 25 (when locked and barred);



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

My computer died a few weeks ago. After reinstalling the OS, trying new RAM and new hard discs, my wife and I simply decided to fill the tower with brand new components. As a result of the meltdown, I lost the list of .pdf subscribers. I hope they read this and re-subscribe. Fortunately, no other Iridia data was lost.

The Create Fetish feat in this issue is one of my favorite third party d20 creations. It reminds me of the street mage I used to play in Shadowrun 2e. Instead of scrolls, street mages could store spells in fetishes, which they wore as bracelets, necklaces and so on. I used a spell fetish against the PCs in my campaign once and they were pretty surprised.

Until next time, Christian

Create Fetish

d&d 3.5

design by christopher jones

art by dan smith

A rat's skull decorated with feathers and beads, a string of polished stones with runes carved on them, a desiccated lizard stuffed with medicinal herbs – not exactly what comes to mind when a wizard ponders disposable spell storing devices. The scroll is the most common vehicles for such purposes in 3.5, but it shouldn't be the only means. Surely, primitive cultures and spell casters with strong ties to nature should have a means to store magical energy? Enter the fetish!

Fetishes are most often created by primitive spell casters, or those without access to more traditional methods of magic item creations. Fetishes are also employed by those who appreciate their artistic appeal.

Create Fetish [Item Creation]

The spellcaster may create primitive, mystical charms.

Prerequisites: Caster level 1st

Benefit: A character can create fetish of any spell that she knows. Creating a fetish takes one day for each 1,000 gp in its base price. The base price of a fetish is its spell level multiplied by its caster level multiplied by 25 gp. (spell level x caster level x 25 gp) To create a fetish, she must spend 1/25 of this price in xp and use up raw materials costing half of this base price.

Any fetish that stores a spell with a costly material component or an xp cost also carries a commensurate cost. In addition to the costs derived from the base price, the character must expend the material component or pay xp when creating it.

Special: Fetishes are the spell scrolls of primitive cultures. Like scrolls, the spells contained in a fetish may be released when certain conditions are met. In the case of scrolls, it's when they are read aloud. For fetishes, however, it's when a specific chant, dance or ritual is engaged. The fetish maker determines at the time of creation the exact nature of the triggering requirement. For example, Hartsbow the Green creates a beaded rattle fetish that will allow him to cast *Control Weather*. At the time of creation, he decides the trigger will be a rain dance popular amongst his people's shamans. As with scrolls, once the spell has been cast the fetish becomes useless.



*A sorceress wears a fetish
she crafted that contains a
Scare spell.*

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

art by dan smith

"Well aren't you a pretty little thing. Why don't you come over here and give Samuel a kiss?"

Samuel Snells

Samuel Snells is a disgusting pervert with a long list of revolting sexual pleasures he likes to indulge. When not satisfying his grotesque urges, Samuel works as a blackmailer and informant. He has managed to acquire dirt on many prominent citizens in the Freecity of Mirrym. Samuel parlays this information into gold he uses to fund week-long binges of alcohol and sex.

There is considerable speculation as to how Samuel comes by such accurate – and scandalous – information. One theory is that Samuel encounters some of the same escorts that cater to wealthy clientele. It's possible that he bribes them into sharing juicy gossip with him. Alternatively, Samuel may simply be a very good burglar who breaks into peoples' homes in order to spy on them.

Good-aligned characters might be looking to apprehend Samuel for a number of reasons. Since his sexual appetites often shock the conscience, Samuel might be wanted because his exploits are deemed criminal by city officials. The city's elite might grow weary of Samuel's blackmailing. They might hire the party to arrest Samuel so that he can be jailed.

Criminal-minded characters might use Samuel as a contact. They could purchase information from Samuel that they could use in their own blackmailing schemes. Conversely, victims of Samuel's smear campaigns might hire the party to kill him.



Samuel Snells, male human Rog3; Medium humanoid (5' 6", 155 lbs); CR 3; HD 3d6+3; hp 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 14 (+2 padded armor +1, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 12.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +3;

Melee: Dagger +3 (+2 BAB, +1 str) (d4+1, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Dagger +4 (+2 BAB, +2 dex) (d4+1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 12 (+1), Int 15 (+2), Wis 13 (+1), Cha 8 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +7, Bluff +4, Disable Device +7, Forgery +8, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (freecity of mirrym) +8, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Search +10, Spot +8; Alertness, Investigator, Skill Focus (gather information).

Special Abilities: Sneak Attack +2d6, Trap Sense +1, Evasion, Trapfinding.

Possessions: Padded armor +1, dagger, belt pouch x 2, scroll case, parchment, ink, quill, thieves' tools, spyglass, thunderstone, anti-toxin, magnifying glass, 3 x 50 gp gems, 15 gp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I'll present the index for the first 50 issues of Iridia next week. I think it will be a good way to keep track of all the NPCs, feats and locations that have been covered. After the index is published, a compilation of the first 50 issues will be made available at the Iridia website for download. In other news, I'm still depressed about Dragon's demise. I know that content will be available online, but it won't be the same. I can't believe how many great game mags have come and gone. Pyramid (print version), Shadis, Arcane, Inphobia, JTAS, Challenge, etc. I miss them all. I've been pondering some changes to this zine for a while now. The demise of print Dragon has inspired me to move forward with my plans. More on this subject next issue.

Until next time, Christian

Numrikan

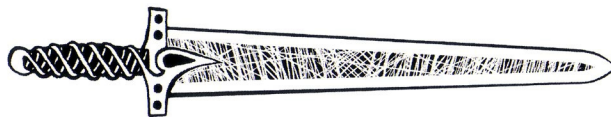
exploring the freelands of mirrym
art by ed bourelle and daniel williams

"Letting people think I am weak is all part of my plan."

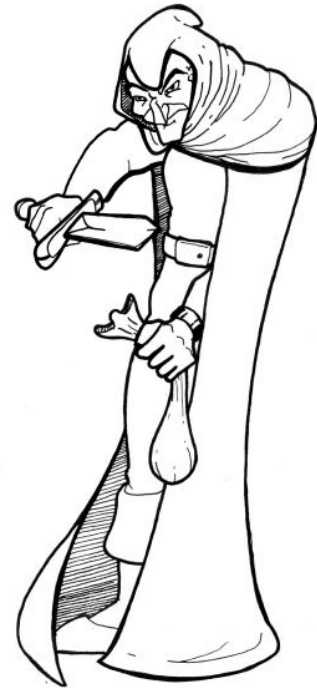
Kel Darbec

Kel Darbec is not known for being a killer. His areas of expertise are burglary and blackmail. Nevertheless, Kel is capable of defending himself if need be. During a recent burglary, Kel was cornered by four members of the city watch. Kel produced a distinctive shortsword and managed to wound two of the watchmen before fleeing. After reading accounts of the fight, Ocindra Moreau, a noted expert on swords, believes the sword is called Numrikan. From her notes:

"Crafted 100 years ago by the dwarven outcast Griokor Gravenshield for his own private, mischievous use, Numrikan has contributed to the brutal and sudden death of many innocent people. Griokor lost the sword to a better killer and it is now believed to be in the possession of Kel Darbec, a thief residing in the Freecity of Mirrym."



Numrikan is a +1 shortsword with a sordid past. Ocindra would pay handsomely to have it in her possession as it would make an excellent addition to her collection. Ed Bourelle illustration.



Kel Darbec was introduced in Iridia 36. Daniel Williams illustration.

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

by james stubbs

art by mikhel whelan

"Do you think you can handle me?"

Daya

The bloated bastard had finally fallen asleep. Daya quietly untied her belled anklets and gently placed them on a cushion. Oh, he had been so very easy. She smirked at the recollection of the smoldering glance over the rim of her wineglass. The fat fool had already been unsteady and heavily into his cups when she plied him with more drink, teasing dances and songs. He had been generous in his drunken stupor so that it was only natural for a few more gold pieces to hire her proffered services for the night. Her whispered promises had been many, but the only thing that she had guaranteed to herself was that he was going to be much lighter of coin in the morning.

The lump on the bed rolled over noisily. She remembered with distaste his pudgy fingers and their clumsy attempts to caress her. Fortunately, she had been nimble enough to keep up her fleeting teases long enough for him to take his besotted frustration and ardor out on a consoling bottle until sleep took him.

Her bare feet padded across the cold floor to the leather satchel that she had been eyeing since she had entered his room. An official seal from the mayor of the Freecity glimmered dully at her in the moonlight seeping through the window. A quick look revealed no unfortunate surprises and she relieved it of its heavy sack of coins as well as a few rolled up sheaves of parchment. Official documents and secrets could always be sold to the correct interested party. It wasn't a bad bonus for a night's work. Seducing simpering diplomats was much easier than her work in the past.

Her fingers toyed with the latch on the windowpanes until it quietly yielded. Her thin flowing dancer's silks had been strategically wrapped around her body so that they wouldn't hinder her. Modesty was discarded in favor of motion. It wouldn't be the first time someone had seen a half-naked woman climbing out of a window. The Freecity was rife with tales and rumors of unfaithful noblemen and ribald merchants. The night was cold against her exposed skin as she made sure that the panes were angled so that an errant gust of wind wouldn't wake the slumbering bulk.

Getting a grip with her bare feet and hands wasn't a problem for her trained limbs and soon Daya had disappeared into mystery, never to be seen again.



Daya, female human Exp3; Medium humanoid (5' 5", 105 lbs); CR 2; HD 3d6; hp 12; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 12 (+2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +2;

Melee: Dagger +2 (+2 BAB) (d4, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14 (+2), Con 10, Int 13 (+1), Wis 11, Cha 16 (+3).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +7, Knowledge (freecity of mirrym) +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +4, Tumble +3; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Negotiator.

Possessions: Fine silks, 3 x 25 gp gems, 2 x 50 gp gems, Potion of Invisibility, dagger.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Welcome to Iridia 50! Last issue I mentioned that I had been thinking of making changes to Iridia. Now that we've arrived at the fiftieth issue, I think it's time to share with you what's been on my mind. While I have enjoyed publishing Iridia in a single-sheet format, it has its limitations. Doing mailings and web updates each week has become too time consuming. Also, there's never enough space to explore more in-depth ideas. Therefore, Iridia will be switching to a digest format. Iridia 51 will be published November 1. Iridia will primarily be distributed in print, although print-ready .pdfs will be available online. See you in November!

Until next time, Christian

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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I changed my mind. I published an issue of Iridia in digest format, thought about it, then pulled the plug. The expense, the editing, the hustling to try and push issues - it overwhelmed me. I was reminded of all the things I hated about my old Scrollworks zine. A single-sheet rag is just easier to do. There's less stress and it's still fun. Apologies for any confusion.

Until next time, Christian

Iron Rations

basic d&d

Aithne hated to admit it, but things weren't looking good. She and her companions had wandered for days in the mountains, looking for some dwarven ruins. When they finally found them, Aithne almost wished they hadn't.

The ruins were built into a cliff face, with only the remnants of large double doors visible. The doors were in terrible shape and it was clear that a great battle had taken place here long ago. Deep cuts were visible in the doors, as if they had been hacked at with axes. Littering the entrance were the skeletal remains of goblins and dwarves alike.

Abel gripped his sword nervously. He looked at Devon and asked, "This is going to suck, isn't it?"

"Yes, Abel, I think it will."

"Great," muttered Apris. "I'm probably going to get mauled or something."

"One can hope," thought Aithne. "One can hope..."

Dwarven Way Station

The companions had located an abandoned way station used by dwarves from the Shale Mountains as a resting place during their prospecting expeditions. Eventually, a goblin warband discovered its location and attacked en masse. Ten dwarven defenders held off 100 goblins for several days until finally succumbing. The victorious goblins looted the way station then left. Since then it has been used as a lair for a number of wandering monsters. Currently, six bugbears are residing within.

a) Entrance: A short flight of stairs carved into the rock leads up to large, wooden double doors. The double doors are in terrible disrepair. It appears as if they have been hacked at with axes and battered with rocks, in addition to being peppered with arrows. Scattered about are the skeletal remains of several dwarves and a few dozen goblins. The weapons and armor of the fallen are rusted and have no value.

b) Foyer: This small space is occupied by the skeletal remains of a few dwarves and at least a dozen goblins. The skeletons completely cover the floor. There are two iron torch sconces in the wall. There is nothing of value in this room.

c) Front Hall: Skeletal remains, dwarf and humanoid alike, litter the floor. There is nothing of value to be found amid the chipped axes and rusted mail. Iron torch sconces are built into the walls. A wooden door in the north wall is slightly ajar. Unknown to the characters, a bugbear sentry listens on the other side. It will silently move away from the door to alert its companions in the main hall.

d) Main Hall: A nasty surprise awaits the first character through this door. Ready to pounce are three bugbears, with three more lurking in the shadows. When the door is opened by a character, the bugbears will

surprise the party on a roll of 1-3 on a d6. After the first round of combat, the remaining three bugbears will emerge from the shadows to attack.

Anything of value in this room has been carried away long ago. There are doors in the north, east and west walls. The sconces in the walls do not hold torches, so the room will be pitch black unless the party has a light source.

Bugbears (6); AC: 5, Hit Dice: 3+1, Hit Points: 13, Move: 90', Attacks: 1, Damage: d6+1 (club), Save As: Fighter 3, Morale: 9, Alignment: Chaotic, Special: Bugbears surprise on a roll of 1-3 on a d6. Due to their strength, they add +1 to damage when using a weapon.

e) Storage: This room was once used as storage by the dwarves. It is now empty, except for a few cave crickets and spiders.

f) Kitchen: An iron pot hangs from the ceiling, suspended by a chain. The bugbears are using the pot as a convenient storage place for their treasure. Inside are 250 cps, 100 sp and 100 gp. To guard their loot, a pit viper (8 hp) has been placed on top of the coins. The snake has been fed a rat to keep it from wandering off. Any character foolish enough to stick a hand into the pot is in for a nasty surprise.

Pit Viper; AC 6, Hit Dice: 2, Hit Points: 8, Move 90' (30'), Attacks: 1 bite, Damage: 1-4 + poison, Save As: Fighter 1, Morale: 7, Alignment: Neutral, Special: Due to their keen senses, pit vipers always win initiative. Any victim bitten by a pit viper must save vs. Poison or die.

g) Sleeping Quarters: After descending a flight of stairs, the characters will arrive in a chamber once used as a communal sleeping area. The wooden bunks have succumbed to dry rot. A few insects skitter about.

In the SE corner is a secret storage space in the floor. The space - a mere 3' x 3' - is concealed under an expertly cut flagstone that blends in perfectly with the floor. An elf character who rolls a 1-2 on a d6 will be able to locate it. A +1 sword is hidden inside. It was commissioned by a noble decades ago, but was never delivered.

Abel Artone slumped against the wall. His head pounded and blood oozed down his cheek from a cut above his eye. Apris the Wondrous dabbed at the wound, whispering encouraging words to him.

"You did well, Abel. I'm so proud of you, so so proud."

"As am I," said Devon as he stepped into the room, a smile upon his face. "I found something for you, Abel."

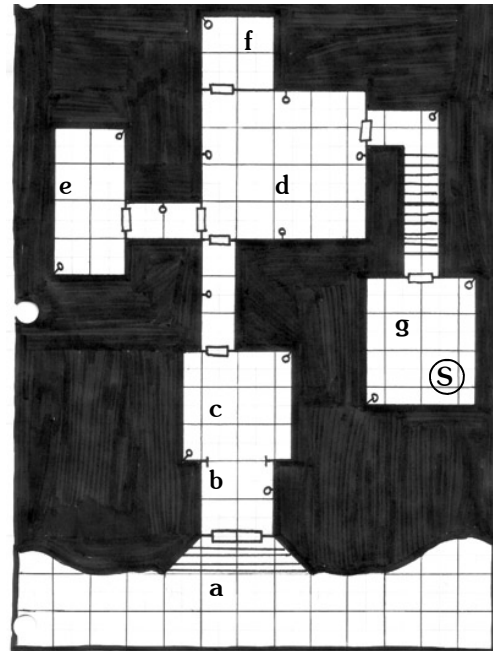
"I hope it's not another bugbear, Devon. Those damn things really pack a punch. Forget dwarves. I used to hate dwarves, but now I hate bugbears."

"Well, this will make you feel better." Devon placed a finely crafted sword on Abel's lap. Delicate runes etched into its keen blade hinted at its magical nature.

Abel clutched the blade to his chest. "Thank you, Devon. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

Upon noting the frown on Apris' face, he amended his words. "I mean besides Apris it's the most beautiful thing in the world."

With that said, Abel leaned back and closed his eyes for a bit of well-deserved rest.



Key

one square = 5'

- a) Entrance
- b) Foyer
- c) Front Hall
- d) Main Hall
- e) Storage
- f) Kitchen
- g) Sleeping Quarters



Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been wanting to work on a series of articles detailing the kinds of places characters would go to purchase magic items. Because magic is so specialized, the idea of a "magic shop" where one could purchase swords, wands and potions is kind of silly. Instead, I think unique stores catering to a specific clientele might be more appropriate. In this first installment I present an alchemist's shop. The shop's proprietor and familiar will be featured next week. Please send questions and comments to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Gwen's Alchemy

exploring the freelands of mirrym

After leaving the tutelage of her master, Gwen Avery joined an ill-fated adventuring group. The group's leader, Giles Brand, claimed to have a map that lead to a dwarven treasure vault in the Dragon Run Mountains. The adventurers did not find any treasure, but they did find bandits, wyverns, cold rain and dysentery. Not exactly the kinds of things that bards sing songs about.

Frustrated, Gwen returned home to Perganon, a large town in the eastern portion of the Freelands of Mirrym. She borrowed money from her family and set up shop as an alchemist. Brewing potions and making tindertwigs isn't the most glamorous work, but it's far better than sleeping in the mud and eating biscuits full of weevils.

Gwen's Shop

Gwen works out of a modest two-story building on the corner of Bookbinder and Coppersmith streets. Its most noticeable features are the lovely stained glass windows that Gwen had custom made. Gwen lives alone, although her lover, a prosperous merchant named Jonathan Lansing, is a frequent guest. Below is a description of her shop.

a) Entry: Anyone wishing to enter the shop must first ring a bell mounted near the front door to announce their presence. Upon hearing the bell, Gwen will emerge from her workshop. She will ask a potential customer a few questions about their identity and needs before unlocking the door. (Gwen conducts the interviews via a small peephole.)

b) Workshop: Gwen's lab is where she truly feels at home. Gwen prefers a neat and tidy workspace, so all of her mortars, pestles, vials and beakers are neatly stored. Shelves contain her alchemist equipment, as well as clearly labeled raw materials. These materials include bits of anatomy from various creatures, powders and foul-smelling liquids. Combined, they are worth 250 gp to another wizard, but are of little value to anyone else.

Gwen's alchemy equipment is worth 500 gp. A thief would net only a fraction of that value due to the difficulty of fencing such complex, signature equipment. Moreover, moving the lab would require the careful disposal of various beakers and vials that contain potentially hazardous liquids. Careless handling would result in a horrid stench at best, a toxic cloud at worst.

A locked cabinet (Open Lock DC 20) contains the following finished potions (all prepared at the 5th level): *Comprehend Languages* (250 gp), *Detect Secret Doors* (250 gp), *Change Self* (250 gp), *Jump* (250 gp), *Detect Thoughts* (500 gp), *Darkvision* (500 gp) and *Blink* (750 gp). Five tindertwigs (1 gp each), a flask of acid (10 gp), a vial of antitoxin (50 gp) and two thunderstones (30 gp each) are also in the cabinet. The

potions and alchemy items are for sale. At the bottom of the cabinet, hidden under a cloak, is a small chest with a simple latch. It contains 3 amethysts in a felt bag, each worth 50 gp. There are also 75 sp and 100 gp.

Gwen's desk contains detailed ledgers of her business activities. It also holds a book that provides detailed instructions for brewing and identifying common potions. The book is worth 100 gp. In addition to its value, the book provides Gwen a +2 circumstance bonus to Craft (alchemy) checks.

A backdoor leads to an alley where Gwen dumps her chamber pot. Even though she has developed a powder that desiccates and removes odor from human waste, Gwen prefers that the alley remains dirty and foul to dissuade loitering. The lab also has a fireplace that Gwen uses for warmth, cooking and distilling.

c) Pantry: Cooking is a natural extension of alchemy. Gwen loves to cook for herself and Jonathan. She stores a variety of good quality foodstuffs here, as well as a mop, broom and bucket.

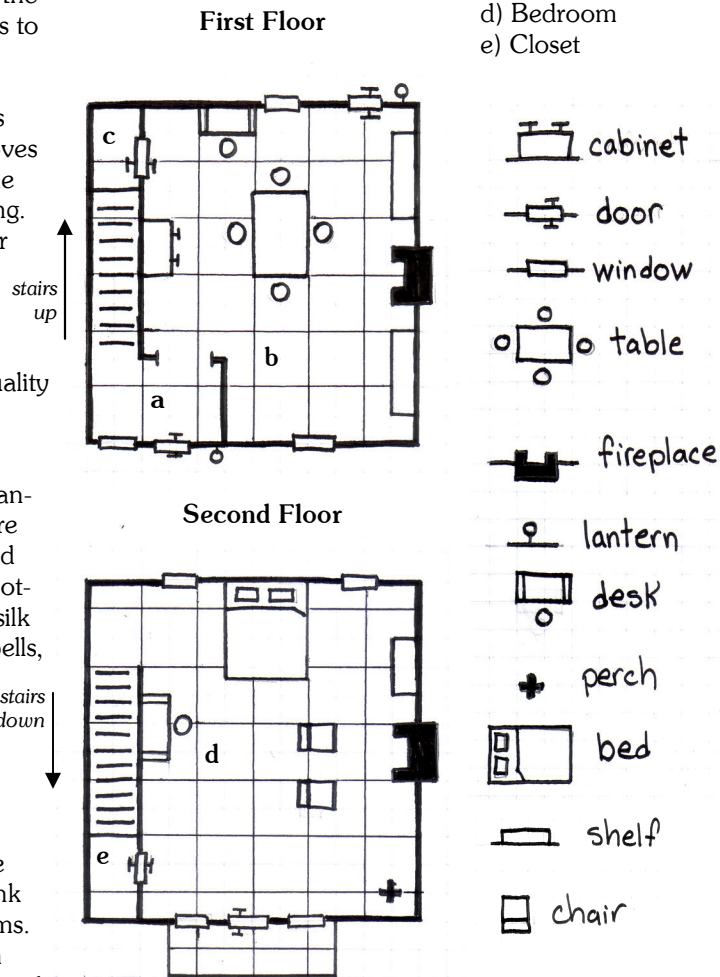
d) Bedroom: A large four-poster bed with a canopy dominates this spacious room. Drawers are built into the frame, which hold her clothes and other personal items. Her spellbook is at the bottom of one of the drawers, hidden beneath a silk nightgown. It contains all of her memorized spells, in addition to *Comprehend Languages*, *Detect Secret Doors*, *Jump*, *Mage Armor* and *Change Self*.

A balcony overlooks the street in front of Gwen's shop. Her bedroom also has a fireplace and two comfortable chairs. Gwen and Jonathan often sit in the chairs and relax while enjoying a fine bottle of wine. They like to drink from two silver chalices set with lapis lazuli gems. They were a gift from Jonathan and are worth 105 gp each. A desk contains personal letters and a diary. A masterwork dagger used to open envelopes can be found in the top drawer. The final piece of furniture is a perch for Gwen's owl familiar. His name is Osric and he is a steady, quiet companion. He's also an excellent night watchman.

e) Closet: A closet in the corner stores some of the nicer dresses that Jonathan has purchased for Gwen. She tends toward neutral-colored smocks during the day, but likes to slip into something more flattering in the evening.

Key
one square = 5'

- a) Entry
- b) Workshop
- c) Pantry
- d) Bedroom
- e) Closet



Gwen's Alchemy

Superior Masonry Walls: 1' thick, Break DC 35, Hardness 8, Hit Points 180 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 25, Break DC Stuck16/Locked 18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 25, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked18.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

In the last issue I introduced an alchemy shop run by a wizard named Gwen Avery. This week I'll share Gwen's stat block, as well as her familiar's. In addition, you can read about some magical poisons she's created. At the time of writing, I'm way ahead in the publishing schedule. I think it's important to make forward progress when I can. Despite my best efforts, there'll be times when I get sick, lose focus for a while or get distracted. In other news, have you been listening to the podcasts? They are always a good way to glean some additional information about each issue.

Until next time, Christian

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

"I've traded sleeping in the mud for sleeping between silk sheets with my lover. It's not a glamorous life, but it's safe."

Gwen Avery, alchemist

Gwen is the talented alchemist who owns Gwen's Alchemy. She has a well-deserved reputation for quality and honesty. Gwen dabbles in the creation of unusual poisons that combine potent animal venom with magic. For example, she's learned that the weakness-inducing venom of a large spider can be enhanced with a *Sleep* spell. If the initial spider venom does not incapacitate a foe, then the magical effect - the spell - certainly will. Gwen developed her magical poisons while trying to figure out non-lethal ways of securing her home and possessions against intruders. Rumors of her work have caught the attention of the local Thieves' Guild, who would love to possess such poisons. Below are two examples of her work.



Matt Brackney illustration

Spider Bite Poison

Spider Bite is an enchanted injury poison based upon the venom from a medium-sized spider. A single dose can coat the striking portion of any two small or any one medium or large slashing or piercing weapons. Any living creature injured by a treated weapon must make a Fort save (DC 14) to avoid 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. Secondary damage is 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage unless the victim again succeeds at another DC 14 Fort save. Tertiary damage is equal to a *Sleep* spell cast at the 5th level of ability. A Will save (DC 11) negates the *Sleep* effect. The *Sleep* effect only applies to the poisoned individual.

Caster Level: 3rd; Prerequisites: Brew Potion, *Sleep*; Cost to Create: 150 gp.

Tasha's Hideous Laughing Venom

This injury poison is created by enchanting the venom of a large scorpion. A single dose can coat the striking portion of any two small or any one medium or large slashing or piercing weapons. Any living creature injured by the coated weapon must make a Fort save (DC 18) or suffer 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage. Secondary damage is an additional 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage unless another DC 18 Fort save is made. Tertiary damage is equal to *Tasha's Hideous Laughter* cast at the 3rd level of ability. A Will save (DC 12) negates the spell effect.

Caster Level: 3rd; Prerequisites: Brew Potion, *Tasha's Hideous Laughter*; Cost to Create: 300 gp.

Using Gwen's Alchemy In Play

Gwen's shop can be placed in any town or city in your campaign. Below are a few scenarios that can be prepared with very little effort.

1) Services for Hire: Characters fresh from the field might have potions that they need identified. Gwen's rates are as follows: Identify Substance: 20 gp, Identify Potion: 20 gp, Identify Poison 30 gp. She will brew potions on demand for the fees detailed in the DMG.

2) Bodyguards Needed: Jonathan Lansing, Gwen's lover, fears for her safety. He has heard rumors that the Thieves' Guild wants to force Gwen to brew magical poisons for them. Jonathan will hire the party to keep an eye on Gwen's lab. While on the job, a group of rogues will attempt to break into the shop. If the party intervenes and apprehends the thieves, they will have Jonathan's eternal gratitude.

3) Tempting Target: For unscrupulous characters, the allure of Gwen's shop might be too much to pass up. Rumors of potions, gold and magical poisons would make any rogue salivate. Also, Gwen is known to have a wealthy lover. Perhaps if she was kidnapped, he might pay a hefty ransom for her safe return.

4) Have lightning bolt, will travel. Even though Gwen has a very comfortable life, she is concerned that her skills as a wizard are slipping. Imbuing potions with magical energy takes its toll. She thinks that it might be time to head out into the field in order to revitalize and challenge herself. Therefore, if a good-aligned party of adventurers are in need of magical support, Gwen might be willing to accompany them.

Gwen Avery, female human Wiz5; Medium humanoid (5' 5", 105 lbs); CR 5; HD 5d4; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL NG;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +2;

Melee: Dagger +2 (+2 BAB) (d4, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +6.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12 (+1), Con 10, Int 16 (+3), Wis 15 (+2), Cha 14 (+2).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +2, Craft (alchemy) +14, Decipher Script +6, Knowledge (arcane) +11, Knowledge (local - perganon) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +6, Spellcraft +10, Spot +6 (+9 in shadows); Brew Potion, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (craft - alchemy).

Spells (4/4/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level, 0% arcane spell failure chance): 0-*Detect Magic* x2, *Mage Hand*, *Arcane Mark*; 1-*Alarm*, *Unseen Servant*, *Sleep*, *Identify*; 2-*Detect Thoughts*, *Tasha's Hideous Laughter*, *Darkvision*; 3-*Blink*, *Lightning Bolt*.

Possessions: Keys to the front and back doors of her shop and the cabinet in the lab, finely wrought gold bracelet (55 gp value), onyx earrings (50 gp value), silver ring set with a bloodstone (75 gp value).

Osric the Owl; Tiny animal (2', 8 lbs); CR 1/4; HD 5d4; hp 6; Init +7; Spd 10 ft, fly 40 ft (average); AL NG;

Armor: AC 18 (+2 size, +3 dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 15.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp -11;

Melee: Talons +5 (d4-3).

Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft/ 0 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +6.

Abilities: Str 4 (-3), Dex 17 (+3), Con 10, Int 8 (-1), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 4 (-3).

Languages: None.

Special Qualities: Alertness, Deliver Touch Spells, Empathetic Link, Improved Evasion, Low-light Vision, Share Spells, Speak with Master.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +2, Craft (alchemy) +7, Decipher Script +2, Knowledge (arcane) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +2, Knowledge (local - perganon) +4, Spellcraft +6, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Spot +6 (+14 in areas of shadowy illumination); Weapon Finesse.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been meaning to get back to my GURPS bestiary project for awhile. The ratling on the back page will make for an easy-to-defeat foe, although waves of attackers employing ambush tactics might increase the challenge. I miss my old gaming group; I really think they would have enjoyed tangling with these rodents.

In other news, Iridia got some love from Matt Borselli. He mentioned Iridia 46 and 47 in his 1001 Nights and 1 Night zine. He's planning a fantasy law enforcement campaign that looks pretty sweet. Give it a read at <http://1001nightsand1night.110mb.com/>

Speaking of fantasy law enforcement, James Stubbs of Heyoka Studios (coolest name ever) sent me a copy of his company's new game. It's called, "Medieval Mysteries, Sleuthing in the Middle Ages." It looks great and the adventure hooks that come with it are amazing. It's a \$4.25 download at RPGNow.com. Check it out!

Until next time, Christian

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

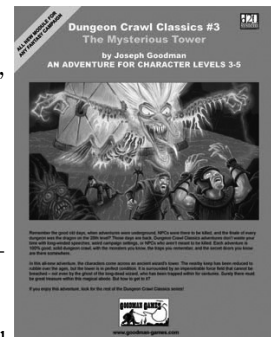
The Mysterious Tower is the third installment in the Dungeon Crawl Classics series from Goodman Games. Written by Joseph Goodman and featuring cover art by Erol Otus, The Mysterious Tower will pose an exciting challenge to a party of 3rd-5th level characters. There is a lot of combat in this adventure, which is to be expected in this series of modules. Some have complained about this, but that's ridiculous. Of course there's going to be a ton of fighting. It reads, "dungeon crawl" on the cover!

Haunted towers have long been a feature of adventure gaming dating back to the legendary Ghost Tower of Inverness. This module adds to that heritage. In this adventure, the party must explore a tower haunted by the ghost of the wizard who built it. When he was alive, the wizard so despised visitors that he created a *Wall of Force* to encase his entire tower. Sadly, the wizard ended up trapped inside, went mad, eventually died and now roams his tower as a ghost.

The module offers a variety of encounters. There is a dungeon level that features monsters inhabiting a tomb complex. One floor of the tower is heavily trapped and will require a great deal of problem solving. Poking around the wizard's laboratory will offer the characters a chance to tinker with lots of magical items. Finally, there is quite a bit of treasure awaiting the party if they overcome a difficult battle with a Djinni.

What appeals to me most about this adventure is the abundance of material that can be used in other campaigns. For example, the tomb area is home to a wight, who was once devoted to a long-forgotten god. This god, Meelkor, is described in detail and might make an interesting addition to a homebrew setting. The wight wields a unique magic item, a wooden sword that strikes as a +2 longsword. It would make the perfect weapon for a peasant NPC warrior. The enchanted furniture found in the wizard's lab could be placed in another spellcaster's home.

In summation, The Mysterious Tower is an interesting mix of traps, monsters and environments. Even if a DM doesn't run it, there's enough material to be mined from it to make the investment worthwhile. Barring that, Joseph's relaxed, conversational writing style makes it an entertaining read at the very least.



Ratling

gurps 4e

concept by dan taylor

"It would be ugly to watch people poking sticks at a caged rat. It's uglier still to watch rats poking sticks at a caged person."

Corporal Harris, city watchman

Ratlings are just as their moniker suggests, small humanoid rat creatures. While standing an average of four feet tall, their distinctive rodent features clearly relay their heritage to the common rat. They have elongated snouts with long whiskers and black beady eyes. Their bodies are covered in coarse hair and the length of their hairless tails are generally equal to their height. A ratling's hands are quite manipulative, enabling them to employ crude spears.

The exact origin of the ratlings is still a matter of speculation. Many believe that the original ratlings were created by arcane means, such as the demented experimentation of a mad wizard, while others insist they evolved naturally from their rodent heritage.

Ratlings are frequently encountered within the sewers and bowels of major cities. They are also known to make their lairs near landfills and anywhere food and trash are discarded. They tend to be scavengers and manage to get by on whatever society discards. They have a reputation as filthy scavengers and are often hunted down, then slaughtered. As a result, ratlings have been known to stage attacks of their own, surprising would-be rat catchers in carefully planned ambushes. Ratlings have been spotted herding giant rats (see Iridia 19), although the reason for this activity is unknown.

Ratlings speak their own language, which is characterized by chirps and squeaks of varying pitch. Their lairs are packed with worthless bits of trash they have managed to scavenge. In addition, each lair is home to 20-30 ratlings.



Jason Fletcher illustration

Ratling (-31 points)

SM -1 (4.5' tall, 90 lbs.);
ST 8 [-20], DX 13 [60], IQ 8 [-40], HT 11 [10];
HP 8, Will 8, Per 11 [15], FP 12;
Basic Lift 13, Damage: Thr 1d-3/Sw 1d-2;
Basic Speed 6.0, Basic Move 6;
Dodge 9, Parry 9 (with spear), Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Acute Hearing 2 [4], Flexibility [5], Night Vision 5 [5], Reduced Consumption 3 (cast iron stomach, -30%; -3 reaction when eating) [4], Resistant to Disease (+8 to resist) [5], Sharp Teeth [1].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dead Broke [-25], Kleptomania (6) [-30], Monstrous Appearance (-5 to reactions) [-20], Reputation (vile scavenger, everyone in the campaign world, all the time; -4 to reactions) [-20].

Skills

Brawling-13 [1], Climbing-12 [1], Spear-12 [1], Stealth-14 [4], Survival (urban)-12 [8].

Attacks

Spear-12, 1d-1 imp, reach 1, parry 9;
two hands, 1d imp, reach 1,2, parry 9;
Bite-13, 1d-4 cut, reach C.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
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On Point

Back in the late 1980's, my friends and I used to have a hell of a good time playing Twilight 2000. We played a lot of D&D, so we were used to slogging it out with sword and shield. When we finally got our hands on automatic weapons and rocket launchers, well, it was ON! We shot up everyone and everything in sight, our teenage aggressions fueled by Mountain Dew and Skittles. Good times. I wrote the scenario below as an homage to Russ, Todd, Matt, Wes and Scott. Guys, I am very sorry for shooting your characters, then claiming, "I'm sorry. It was dark. I thought you were a commie. Really! How was I supposed to know?"

Until next time, Christian

Mission to Ostrow

twilight 2000

Pvt. Perkins opened the door to the van and leaned in for a look. That was the last thing he ever did. We heard an AK open up from inside, then Perkins' head pretty much exploded. We let loose on the van. A few hundred rounds later we took a look. Some Soviet bastard was slumped over, a rifle next to him. He was shot to hell so we pulled out Perkins' body and got a stern lecture from Sgt. Henderson about not sticking our heads into such obvious death traps. We took Perkins' dog tags and gear, then continued scouting. Man, I can't wait to get home.

Cpl. Bose, 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 5th Infantry
Division (Mechanized), US Army

In July of 2000 the US Army's 5th Division braced itself for an attack on its HQ in Kalisz, Poland. Twenty kilometers to the southwest, near a town called Ostrow, elements of the division's mechanized infantry were monitoring the movement of the Soviet 21st Motor Rifle Division.

In the early hours of July 15, the Soviets pulled out of the town and advanced toward Kalisz. As the Soviets left Ostrow, the US troops monitoring the town alerted their division's artillery batteries. By the time ordnance began falling on Ostrow, only a few Soviets remained. Meanwhile, the Polish 10th Tank Division began its own advance on the American HQ. By the end of the day, the Division HQ in Kalisz was overrun. The CO's last radio message was, "You're on your own. Good luck."



*from the Poland campaign map
in the Twilight 2000 box set*

Introduction

Mission to Ostrow is designed as a brief introductory scenario for GDW's Twilight 2000. It requires a GM and three to six players. The mission will introduce the player-characters to their immediate surroundings, while providing opportunities for role-playing and combat.

The Characters

The characters are forward observers attached to the reconnaissance unit mentioned above. Their platoon already has a lieutenant and platoon sergeant, so the characters should be privates or corporals. Because they are trained as forward observers, they should have Forward Observer (FO) as a skill.

The Mission

The characters' superior officer is a cautious, yet capable, 2nd Lieutenant named Daniel Morrow. After the

radio call from the doomed HQ, he will confer with his platoon sergeant, Sgt. First Class John Henderson. Afterward, Lt. Morrow will address the PCs' squad.

"I need you to take one of the hum-vees into Ostrow. Scout the town. Report back here on any Soviet presence and the disposition of the civilians. If you encounter any of our troops retreating from Kalisz, inform them of our position and request orders."

The characters will be given a hum-vee with a roof-mounted M60. It's also equipped with a 5/25 km Manpack/Vehicular radio. The hum-vee can hold six soldiers. If the GM chooses, additional NPC soldiers can accompany the PCs, as long as they all fit in the hum-vee. The GM might also provide the party with one or two armbrusts, since they will come in handy for the encounter with the broken-down BRDM-2.

Ostrow

Prior to the war, Ostrow had a population of 70,000. By American standards it's very old, having been established in the 15th century. It was also the birthplace of Manfred von Richthofen, also known as the Red Baron.

As the characters approach the town from the southeast, they will see smoke rising from the town. Ostrow was heavily shelled and the resulting fires gutted most of the buildings that weren't blown apart. A steady stream of refugees will be seen on the road. Most have a look of stunned disbelief on their faces. They will step aside for the hum-vee and will offer no resistance.

If any of the characters speak Polish, they can stop to talk with the refugees. They will be told that many of the civilians blame the shelling of Ostrow on the Soviets. In the days before the battle of Kalisz, the citizens of Ostrow begged the Soviets to leave. They knew that if the Soviets remained, it was only a matter of time before the Americans attacked.

The Broken-Down BRDM-2

Further down the road, a BRDM-2 belonging to the 21st Soviet Motor Rifle Division will be encountered. It broke down a few days ago and has been sitting here ever since. A private was left behind to guard it. He is bored out of his mind and not paying much attention. As a result, the characters' hum-vee will be able to close to within 200 meters before he reacts. As the characters close in on the BRDM, they will spot a dozen civilians between themselves and the Soviet vehicle. When the civilians see the hum-vee, they will scatter, not wanting to get caught in a crossfire.

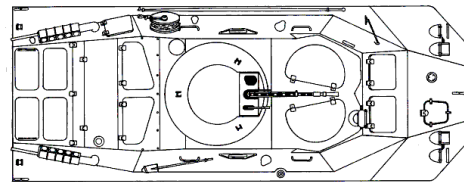
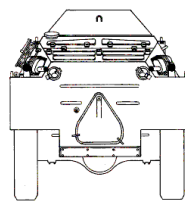
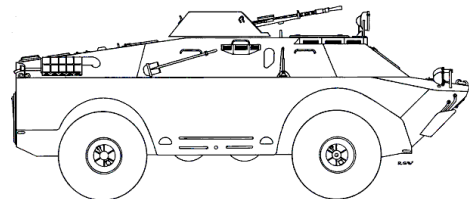
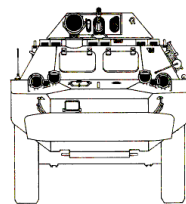
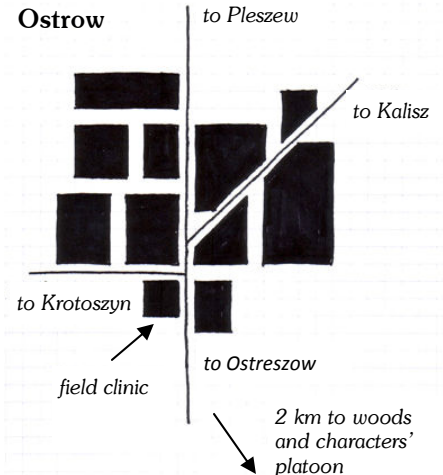
When the Soviet rifleman finally looks up and sees the hum-vee, he'll open up with his AK-74. His next action will be to enter the BRDM-2 to man the PK machinegun. Ditches lay along either side of the road. If the characters come under machinegun fire, they can retreat there for cover. As the fire-fight commences, the GM should describe the screaming of the terrified civilians.

Please see the end of the scenario for the BRDM-2's statistics.

The Field Clinic

As the party enters the town (see map above), they will encounter a makeshift clinic. It was set up by Senior Lieutenant Andrei Baranov, a concerned Soviet doctor. He was drafted into the army and cares more about civilian losses than military tactics and regulations. He is running low on medical supplies, but is doing his best to deal with the growing numbers of wounded presenting themselves for treatment.

Lt. Baranov is aided by a civilian nurse. Five Soviet soldiers are acting as guards and orderlies. They are



armed, but rather unskilled since they work primarily in administrative positions. To the right is a map of the ruined block where the clinic is located. Below are descriptions of the keyed areas.

a) Soldier: A Soviet private is standing guard here. When the characters' hum-vee approaches, he will kneel behind some rubble and begin firing his AK-74. Because he's kneeling behind cinder blocks, only his head and arms are visible. The cinder block rubble has an Armor Value of 25. When the characters return fire, he'll run and hide in a nearby broken-down van. If anyone investigates the van, he'll shoot.

b) Solider: Another private is standing guard at this location. He, too, will open fire on the party. When the characters return fire, he will change positions for another firing opportunity. Like the soldier in area "a", he will use the rubble as cover. If wounded, he will flee.

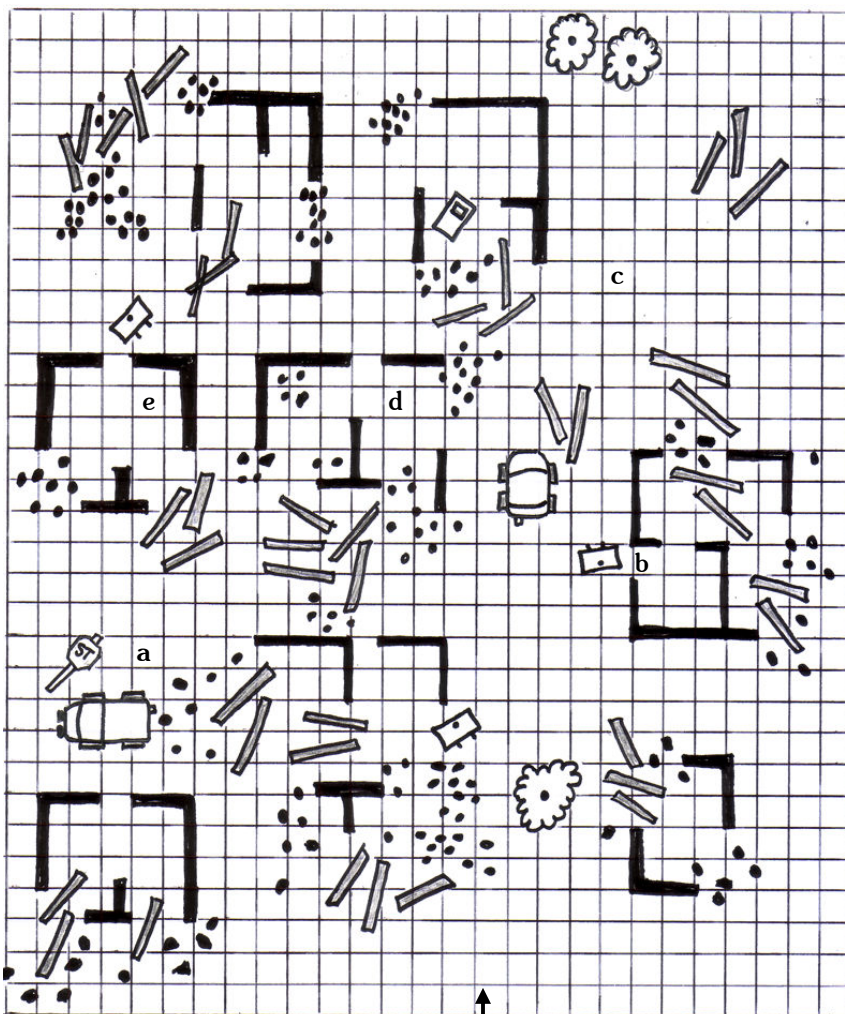
c) Triage: Dr. Baranov is using this area as a triage. Sadly, there are already several dead. Those he can help are moved to area "d" for treatment. When the firing begins, those who can move will huddle in the rubble, while those too injured to escape will moan and wail.

d) Treatment Area: The firefight at areas "a" and "b" will throw the Soviets into a panic. Three Soviet soldiers, who are assisting the doctor, will stop what they are doing, pick up their rifles, then move toward the characters' position. If they are wounded, they will immediately drop their rifles and flee.

If gunfire erupts near the treatment area, Lt. Baranov will yell and scream for everyone to stop firing. The patients and the nurse inside will lay on the floor and try to stay out of the way. Dr. Baranov will surrender if need be and will not pick up a weapon unless his patients are directly threatened.

If the characters agree not to harm Lt. Baranov and his patients, he will provide valuable intel to the characters. From him they will learn that the commander of the Soviet 21st Motorized Rifle Division, Major General Rubachenko, and 100 members of his staff are in town. Few of the 100 staff members are combat soldiers, but they are all armed. Due to the chaotic conditions in Ostrow, the chain of command has largely broken down. There are a few other aid stations set up in town; however, they are all overwhelmed and running low on supplies. Lt. Baranov's English is fairly decent, although heavily accented.

e) Supplies: Dr. Baranov's medical supplies are running low, but what he has left is stored here. The inventory includes: 10 units of total anesthetic (\$100), 10 units of local anesthetic (\$100), 5 units of atropine (\$25),



Key

one square = 1 meter

- a) Soldier
- b) Soldier
- c) Triage
- d) Treatment Area
- e) Supplies

direction of characters' advance

10 units of oral antibiotic (\$75) and 100 units of mild pain reliever (\$500). In some places, medical supplies are used as currency. In addition to the medicine, there are a few cots, several gallons of water and some blankets

The Next Step

The characters will have had to make some challenging decisions. Did they allow fleeing Soviets to survive or were they gunned down? Did they leave Dr. Baranov alone or did they shoot him? In a military-style game, the GM should explore the PCs' decisions and their emotional ramifications.

After the skirmish, the characters should radio their status to Lt. Morrow. He will order the characters to return and make a report. If the characters linger, a Soviet BRDM-2 with four crew members inside will arrive to investigate. Future missions to Ostrow might involve recon, search and destroy or even an assassination attempt of Major General Rubachenko. Below is a write-up for a typical novice-level Soviet soldier of the 21st Motorized Rifle Division. It can be used to represent all of the Soviet soldiers encountered in this scenario, including Dr. Baranov. Dr. Baranov, however, should have MED 50.

Novice Soldier; *Rank:* Private; *Specialty:* Administrative; *Nationality:* Soviet; *Unit:* 21st Motor Rifle Division.

Basic Attributes: STR 12, AGL 12, CON 12, INT 12, EDU 12

Coolness Under Fire: 6

Skills: Combat Rifleman (CRM) 20

Base Hit Numbers: CRM Short 12, Medium 6 Long 2

Hit Capacity: Head 12, Chest 36, All Others 24

Weapon: AK-74, RoF 3, Mag 10, Rng 40, Dam 2, Arm x2

BRDM-2 Armored Reconnaissance Vehicle

In an attempt to improve the amphibious characteristics and increase the combat power of their wheeled reconnaissance vehicles, the Soviets produced the BRDM-2. The BRDM-2 is a fully armored, four-wheel drive, amphibious reconnaissance vehicle with two pairs of belly wheels and a centralized tire pressure regulation system for increased cross-country capability and a single water jet for propulsion through water. Externally, it differs from the BRDM due to a larger, box-like hull. It retains the boat-like bow of the BRDM, but the crew compartment has been moved farther forward and the engine has been moved to the rear. In the basic model, a small conical turret is mounted on the hull in a central position above the belly wheels. The turret holds a 7.62mm PK machinegun. There are two front cupolas, and vision blocks are located centrally on both sides. The engine is larger than in the BRDM (140hp V-8 as opposed to 90hp 6-cylinder). The BRDM-2 is fitted with an IR spotlight and IR driving lights as well as an NBC filter system. The BRDM-2 carries a crew of four (commander, gunner, driver, and co-driver). It also has a land navigation system that gives coordinate readings.

BRDM-2

Right: LH (20), G (20), HB (15)

C, R, P, S, E, F

Left: LH (20), G (20), HB (15)

D, G, S, E, F

Right & Left (oblique): TF (15), TB (15)

Miss

Center Turret: TS (15), TF (15), TB (15)

X, W, N, G

Front: HS (15)

D, C, R

Center Hull: HS (15)

P, G, S

Back: HS (15)

F, E

Front Deck (15)

D, C, R

Top Deck (15)

X, W, N, G, P

Back Deck (15)

S, F, E

PK 7.62mm machinegun: RoF 5, Mag 33, Rng 90/120, Dam 4



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been working very hard to get ahead in my writing duties and I think it's going to pay off. I found out that I have to undergo surgery to have a lesion in my neck removed. I'm guessing that there may be some down-time while I recover.

I've had an NPC from an old GURPS campaign rattling around in my mind, so I thought I'd share. The NPC—a devious talking wolf—sure gave the characters hell, so I hope he finds a home in your game. On the back page is another installment of the “Winter War” series, which shares NPCs and terrain from a D&D 3.5 game. As always, feedback is much appreciated. Hit me up at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Great Wolf

gurps 4e

art by todd sherman

“The highlands above Silent Vale are no place for men.”

Nole, town guardsman

Great wolves are clever predators that stalk man and beast alike. Highly intelligent, great wolves are capable of human speech. The sound of their rasping voice is not soon forgotten by those unfortunate enough to hear it.

Although they tend to be solitary, great wolves have been known to hunt in packs. These hunting parties are greatly feared because great wolves combine speed, stealth and a voracious appetite. Despite their ability to bring down a grown man, great wolves prefer easier prey. They would sooner devour a sheep than slay the shepherd. While a dead sheep might anger the shepherd, a slain shepherd would enrage an entire town.

Great wolves fear fire and will not usually approach anyone carrying a torch or camping near an open flame. Great wolves can communicate with ordinary wolves and will often assume control of a pack.

Other than their ability to speak, great wolves are not physically distinguishable from ordinary wolves.



Great Wolf (6 points)

SM 0 (5' long, 80 lbs.);
ST 10, DX 12 [40], IQ 9 [-20], HT 12 [20];
HP 10, Will 11 [10], Per 14 [25], FP 12;
Basic Lift 20, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d;
Basic Speed 6.0, Basic Move 9 [15];
Dodge 9, Parry -, Block -;
DR 1 [5].

Advantages and Perks

Animal Empathy [5], Discriminatory Smell [15],
Extra Legs (four legs) [5], Fur [1], Night Vision 2
[2], Sharp Teeth [1], Speak with Animals (wolves,
-80%) [5], Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bad Temper [-10], Dead Broke [-25], Disturbing
Voice [-10], Horizontal [-10], Lunacy [-10], No
Fine Manipulators [-30], Phobia (9) (fire) [-7],
Reputation (dangerous predator, everyone, all of
the time; -3 to reactions) [-15], Sleepy (half of the
time) [-8], Social Stigma (monster, -3 to reactions)
[-15].

Skills

Brawling-14 [4], Running-12 [2], Stealth-12 [2],
Survival (mountains)-14 [2], Survival (plains)-14
[2], Survival (woodlands)-14 [2], Tracking-14 [2].

Attacks

Bite-14, 1d-2 cut, reach C.

Faces on the Battlefield

a continuing chronicle of the winter war

art by deems morrione

"I will sing of Iridia's glory with my dying breath."

Sir Andrew, Knight of Iridia and Defender of Brin

Blessed with good looks and a captivating voice, Sir Andrew has always been popular among his fellow soldiers. When he was young, his mother hoped that he would become a cleric. As Andrew developed into a strong, charismatic adolescent, his mother realized that her son would serve Iridia in a more martial capacity. While her heart ached at the thought of what could happen to him in battle, it also swelled with pride. To serve Iridia in war ensured a warrior a place of honor upon Mount Celestia after death.

Eventually war did come, brought by the Necromancer Lords, who carry the battle standard of Veoden, a dark god of death and decay. Despite an arduous campaign, Sir Andrew was one of the selfless knights who volunteered to serve as a rearguard while the armies of the Northern Kingdom retreated for the winter. Along with his fellow defenders, he holds a ruined village named Brin, which lays at the edge of the Necromancer Lords' holdings. The village is now under constant assault from a formidable Wizard/Fighter named Lord Crase.

Sir Andrew worries that he is fighting a losing battle. He and his comrades hold the village only to distract Lord Crase from driving north into their homeland. Maybe, just maybe, he and the other defenders can hold on until spring.

In the meantime, Sir Andrew raises his voice in song. His battle hymns never fail to inspire his comrades or to soothe their nerves after a nasty fight. Even in the midst of combat, his clear, resonant voice echoes above the battlefield, urging his brother knights to victory.

To read more about the Knights of Iridia and their battle for Brin, please see Iridia 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 41.



Sir Andrew, male human Ftr5; Medium humanoid (5' 11", 190 lbs); CR 5; HD

5d10+10; hp 40; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 20 (+8 half-plate +1, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 20.

Attacks: Base Atk +5, Grp +7;

Melee: Longsword +9 (+5 BAB, +2 str, +1 weapon focus, +1 longsword) (d8+5, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 12 (+1), Con 14 (+2), Int 11, Wis 15 (+2), Cha 16 (+3).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +7, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +9, Perform (sing) +8, Spot +4; Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Skill Focus (perform), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: +1 half-plate, heavy steel shield, +1 longsword.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Flipping through my back issues, I paused on the World of Greyhawk material. I noticed a gnome named Schepni and figured I'd write a stat block for him. I must admit that I'm not happy with the omission of gnomes from the 4e PHB. I hear that they might make it into the MM, so perhaps there's hope.

Changing gears, I'm intrigued by console games that allow characters to travel between worlds. They arrive at a destination, defeat a foe, obtain an ability or powerful object, then advance to the next setting. I'd like to try that style of game in a pen-and-paper format. I'm not sure how to pull it off, exactly, but in the meantime I can figure out a way to start. On the back page I present a spirit-inhabited book that can help characters locate portals to new worlds. Of course, the book has its own agenda, so watch out. Enjoy!

Until next time, Christian

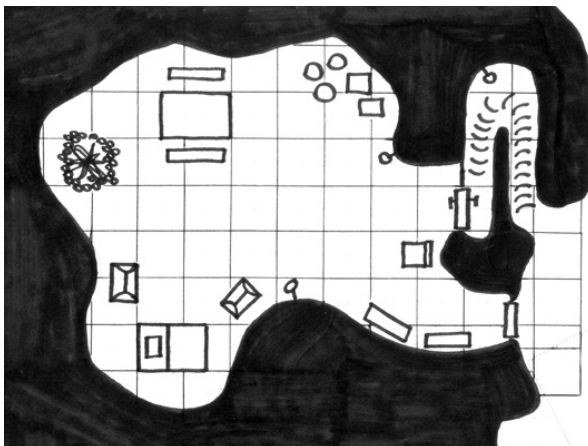
Schepni Brindleton

world of greyhawk

"I may be short, but you smell terrible. And you're real ugly."

Schepni Brindleton

Schepni lives in the Sepia Uplands, where he works as a miner. He sells the precious metals he finds in nearby Traft, even though he'd rather avoid the hustle and bustle of human communities. Schepni also works as a guide from time to time, leading travelers between Perrenland and the Vesse Forest. Because he wanders so frequently, Schepni is a very good source of information about the highlands. Whenever he encounters marauding bands of humanoids, he is sure to spread the news. Schepni enjoys leisurely talks and a good joke. He has little patience for rudeness and will give as good as he gets despite his modest stature.



Schepni Brindleton, male gnome Exp3;

Small humanoid (Gnome)(3' 11", 75 lbs);
CR 2; HD 3d6+6; hp 18; Init +5; Spd 20 ft;
AL NG;

Armor: AC 13 (+1 padded, +1 dex, +1 size), touch 12, flat-footed 11.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +1;
Melee: Dagger +5 (+2 BAB, +1 size, +1 weapon finesse, +1 masterwork dagger) (d3, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Wil +3.

Abilities: Str 9 (-1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 14 (+2), Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Languages: Common, Gnome.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4, Hide +9, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +4, Knowledge (geography - sepia uplands) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Search +4, Spot +4, Use Rope +5; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (dagger).

Special Abilities: Gnome traits.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*Speak With Animals* (burrowing mammal only, 1 minute duration), *Dancing Lights*, *Ghost Sound*, *Prestidigitation*. Caster Level 1st; Save DC 10 + spell level.

Possessions: Masterwork dagger, padded armor, Quall's Feather Token (bird), Potion of *Cure Light Wounds*, 25 gp gem, 15 gp.

Schepni's burrow is carved into the side of a hill and is reinforced with stone and timber. It's cozy, secure and quiet.

Tenzen's Book

gurps 4e

art by ed bourelle

"I can show you worlds beyond your ability to imagine."

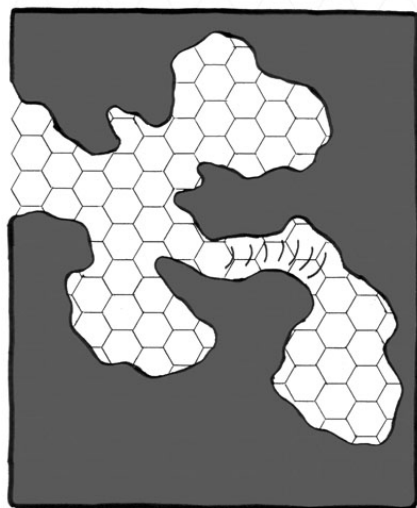
Tenzen

When Tenzen the Wanderer was still in possession of his body, he traveled between worlds in search of great wealth and powerful magic. During his journeys, he acquired an extensive knowledge of planar travel. Tenzen diligently recorded this lore into a tome that he shared with no one.

Eventually, Tenzen fell in battle to a powerful demon. The demon blasted Tenzen's soul from his body with a tremendous psychic attack; however, a portion of Tenzen's spirit remained. The soul fragment imprinted itself upon the very book Tenzen cherished.

Over time, Tenzen became more lucid and was able to recall all of his past travels and experiences. His spirit even learned how to communicate telepathically with those who held the book. In the decades since his corporeal destruction, Tenzen has been passed between various owners. Tenzen desperately hopes to one day find away to escape the book and inhabit a new body. To that end, he is more than happy to guide anyone who carries him through gates between worlds.

The pages of the book containing Tenzen's spirit are full of maps, symbols and indecipherable script that pinpoint the location of gates between worlds. The text was written in a code Tenzen developed himself. He will not share the cipher with anyone. Furthermore, Tenzen will betray his owner if it results in the unification of his spirit with a new body.



Tenzen's Book (-193 points)

SM -4 (18" long, 4 lbs.);
ST 0 [-100], DX 0 [-200], IQ 13 [60], HT 11 [10];
HP 10 [20], Will 13, Per 13, FP 11;
Basic Lift 0, Damage: Thr 0/Sw 0;
Basic Speed 2.75, Basic Move 0;
Dodge -, Parry -, Block -;
DR 1 [5].

Advantages and Perks

360° Vision [25], Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Injury Tolerance (homogenous, no blood, no eyes, no head, no neck) [62], Pressure Support 1 [5], Resistant (metabolic hazards) [30], Signature Gear (illustrated, hand-made book, \$300) [2], Telecommunication (telesend) [30], Unaging [15].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Cannot Speak (mute) [-25], Fragile (combustible) [-5], No Fine Manipulators [-30], No Legs (sessile) [-50], Secret (utter rejection) [-10], Social Stigma (valuable property) [-10], Unhealing (total) [-50], Wealth (dead broke) [-25].

Skills

Cartography-13 [2], Expert Skill (planar travel)-13.

Attacks

None.

Additional Notes

There was quite a lengthy discussion on how to create a sentient item in the GURPS forum at www.sjgames.com. I'll share some of the highlights of that discussion and how it influenced Tenzen's Book in the podcast that supports this issue. Check it out at www.IridiaZine.net. At left is a cave where the book might be discovered by the characters in your campaign. Perhaps the cave is inhabited by goblins (Iridia 38) or ratlings (Iridia 54), who are unaware of its value. Tenzen's spirit would certainly be relieved to be removed from such company!

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Iridia

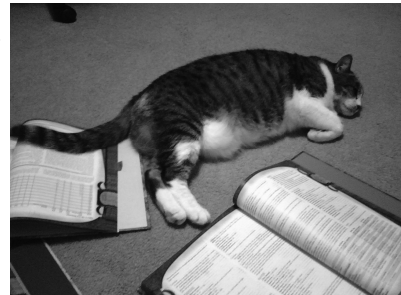
role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

The surgery to remove the tumor in my neck went well. It hurts like hell, but I think I'll be okay. Hopefully my body won't decide to grow another one and I can instead focus on less worrisome subjects.

For this issue I thought I'd continue in Greyhawk. I was inspired by a new module, Iggwilv's Legacy, which can be found at Wizards.com. Assisting me in this endeavour is Penny the cat. She belongs to a friend and my wife and I are watching her while he is away on vacation. Penny seems to like sleeping on my books. What can you do?

Until next time, Christian



Penny the cat is tired of D&D and demands petting.

Hilda Mogh

world of greyhawk

"I absorb all of the hate in the world. I take it in, then spew it right back out."

Hilda Mogh

Hilda Mogh scratches out a meager existence in the highlands above Traft. She has a reputation as a filthy, angry hag, but there are some who value her skills. Brigands and other dishonest folk know of Hilda's healing abilities and often seek her out. Her payment varies, but it's rumored that compensation is often sexual in nature. This might account for her three sons.

There isn't much that Hilda doesn't hate. She loathes the marauding humanoids from Iuz, judgmental Perrenlanders and the annoying gnomes who eye her with suspicion. Hilda spends a lot of time meditating in her cave, channeling all of the dark, swirling energies that surround Oerth. She taps into the malevolence of Vecna, Iuz, Nerull, Hextor and others. Hilda uses all of that negative energy to fuel her spells. She has even gone so far as to tattoo her body with the unholy symbols of Oerth's evil gods.

In addition to her rat familiar, Hilda lives with her three sons—Jesper, Tage and Goran. The young men (all sired by different vagabonds) make a living by breeding, training and selling dogs. Their hounds are most often purchased for use as watchdogs in the warehouse district of Traft. The brothers' ruthless training regimen results in animals that are vicious, yet respond well to commands.

The Mogh family lives in a cramped cave that reeks of wet dog and urine. The area around the cave entrance is littered with trash. Several snarling dogs ensure that no intruder will be able to advance unnoticed.

Please see the following page for additional stat blocks, as well as a map of the cave.

Hilda Mogh, female human Adp3; Medium humanoid (5' 6", 130 lbs); CR 2; HD 3d6+6; hp 18; Init +5; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +1;

Melee: Dagger +1 (+1 BAB) (d4, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11 (+1), Int 13 (+1), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common, gnome.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +4, Heal +5, Hide +1, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +3, Search +2, Spot +3, Spellcraft +3, Survival +5; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness.

Spells (3/3; save DC 12 + spell level, 0% divine spell failure chance): 0-Mending, Purify Food and Drink, Touch of Fatigue; 1-Burning Hands, Cause Fear, Cure Light Wounds.

Possessions: Dagger, filthy clothing, Hand of the Mage, holy symbols, 10 gp.

Scrum the Rat; Tiny animal (1', 2 lbs); CR 1/2; HD 3; hp 7; Init +6; Spd 15 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 16 (+2 natural, +2 size, +2 dex), touch 14, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp -11;

Melee: Bite +5 (d4-3).

Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft/ 0 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Reflex +4, Will +4.

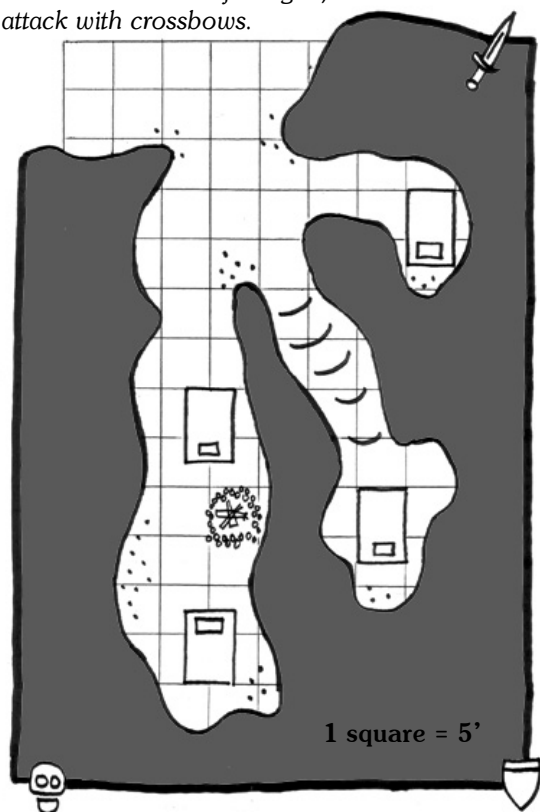
Abilities: Str 2 (-4), Dex 15 (+2), Con 10, Int 2 (-4), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 2 (-4).

Languages: None.

Special Qualities: Alertness, Deliver Touch Spells, Empathetic Link, Improved Evasion, Low-light Vision, Scent, Share Spells.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +12, Concentration +2, Heal +3, Hide +14, Move Silently +10, Survival +3, Swim +10; Weapon Finesse.

Hilda, her familiar, her sons and 5 dogs are an EL 4 encounter. In battle the hounds will swarm characters, while Hilda casts spells (her familiar will deliver Touch of Fatigue) and her sons will attack with crossbows.



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Jesper, Tage or Goran, male human Com2; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 175 lbs); CR 1/2; HD 2d4+2; hp 8; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2;

Ranged: Light crossbow +2 (+1 BAB, +1 dex) (d8, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 12 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 9 (-1), Wis 9 (-1), Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +9, Listen +1, Spot +2; Animal Affinity, Skill Focus (handle animal).

Possessions: Belt pouch with 1 gp, 6 sp.

Dog; Small animal (3', 50 lbs); CR 1/3; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +3; Spd 40 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 15 (+1 size, +3 dex, +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp -3;

Melee: Bite +2 (d4+1).

Space/Reach: 5 ft/ 5 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Reflex +5, Will +1.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 17 (+3), Con 15 (+2), Int 2 (-4), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 6 (-2).

Languages: None.

Special Qualities: Low-Light Vision, Scent.

Skills and Feats: Jump +7, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +1; Alertness, Track.

The Cave

Ceilings and Floor

The ceilings are only 6' high, so some medium humanoids will have to lean down when walking. Weapons like spiked chains and two handed swords should be unusable due to the low ceiling. The cave's floor is even and does not impede movement.

Illumination

During the day, bright illumination from the sun will penetrate 40' into the cave. Beyond that is shadowy illumination. At night, the fire will create bright illumination for 20', then shadowy illumination for 20', then darkness.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

When I heard that Gary Gygax passed away, I called a few old gaming friends. They live in various parts of the country now, but in high school and college Gary's game united us. I will be forever grateful to Gygax for bringing us together. Farewell, master DM.

Gary's passing nudged me to pick up my writing duties, hence the new issue you are now reading. It's been a few months since I last wrote, so I apologize for my delinquency.

Until next time, Christian



Iron Rations

basic d&d

Abel Artone pointed at the diminutive figure before him and laughed. Hard. He didn't stop for quite a while. When he finally did, his face was red from the effort. Finally, Abel composed himself and asked Devon, "What the hell is that?"

"That would be a halfling."

"Halfling? Half of what?"

"That does it!" The halfling stomped his foot and yelled, "I will not be disrespected. I have come to you for aid and this is the response I get? Stupid human!"

Apris glared at Abel, unhappy with the way he mocked the poor little fellow. Aithne then stepped forward to address the halfling, shaking her head as she did so. Abel was forever irritating her with his ignorance.

"I apologize for our warrior's manners. He is of low breeding and has had his mind addled by repeated beatings from superior foes." She continued speaking over Abel's protests. "I am Aithne of Far Isle and I invite you to share your misfortunes with us."

With that, the halfling began his tale of woe...

Gimble Tuffney is in a terrible way. His village is plagued by massive spiders that lurk in the woods nearby. For years, the spiders stayed deep in the woods, content to prey upon deer and other wildlife. As game became more scarce, the spiders expanded their hunting grounds to include the edge of the forest where Gimble and the other halflings forage for wood, mushrooms and wild herbs.

Gimble's fellow villagers want to enter the woods and set fire to the spiders' nest, but they are afraid to do so. Complicating matters is the presence of a cleric, who serves a nature deity. This cleric, named Olwyn, has warned the halflings against such drastic action. Olwyn argues that the spiders have as much of a right to exist as the halflings. An act of genocide would be unconscionable in her opinion.

Desperate, Gimble left his village in order to find help from an outside, clandestine force. He hopes to hire adventurers to stealthily enter the woods, slay the spiders, then escape before Olwyn notices. Sadly, he has little to offer, but perhaps the spiders' nest contains coins and treasure acquired from waylaid travelers?

Please see Iridia 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 35 and 51 for other installments of the Iron Rations series.

Gimble Tuffney, Level 1 Halfling;

Alignment: Lawful; Abilities: Str 7 (-1 to hit and damage), Int 13, Wis 12, Dex 15 (+1 to hit, -1 AC bonus), Con 9, Ch 12; AC: 6 (leather armor, -1 dex); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 6; Attacks: short bow (+2 to hit, 1d6 damage); Move: 90'; Languages: Common, Halfling; Special Abilities: +1 on initiative, -2 to AC when attacked by larger than man-sized creatures, 10% chance of being spotted in woods or underbrush; Equipment: short bow, 20 arrows, leather armor, water skin, iron rations, blanket, 5 gp.

Number 12 Guidry Street

exploring the freelands of mirrym

Kel Darbec is a notorious rogue, who stalks the alleys of the Freecity of Mirrym. Despite numerous attempts, the city watch has been unable to apprehend him. Even when they have had him cornered, Kel has been able to escape after inflicting serious wounds with his shortsword.

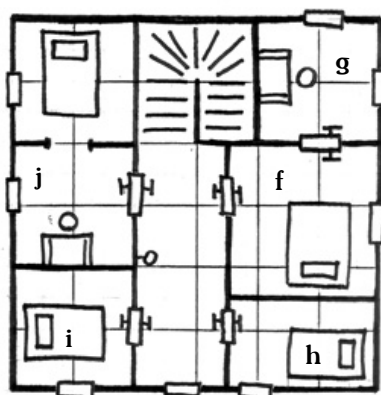
Kel maintains a number of safe houses. By constantly moving between locations, Kel's enemies have a hard time tracking him. One of his favorite residences can be found at number 12 Guidry Street.

It is a foreboding, two storey structure that has seen better days. Shuttered windows, grimy planks and broken glass on the exterior are matched by an equally dismal interior. Kel chooses to let his residence decay as it deters most curious visitors. Kel's neighbors also inhabit rickety abodes, so his home doesn't stand out. Kel quietly enters and exits through the back entrance, so most locals have no idea he owns the place. The only person seen coming and going from number 12 is Gilda Storm, Kel's live-in housekeeper.

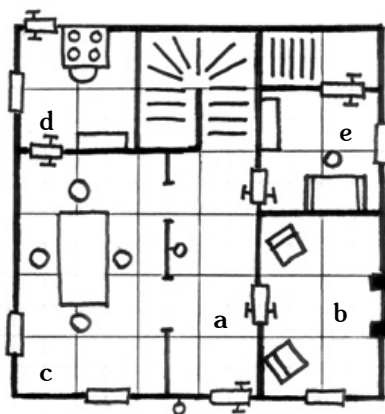
Gilda is a sour-faced, bitter hag who sneers at children and spits on the ground when passer-bys say hello. Kel pays her to answer the door, wash his clothes and to pose as the home's sole occupant.

Feel free to detail the house to suit your needs. Add clever traps, carefully hidden treasure or even magical guardians. I think that a Choker lurking in the rafters might be a nice touch.

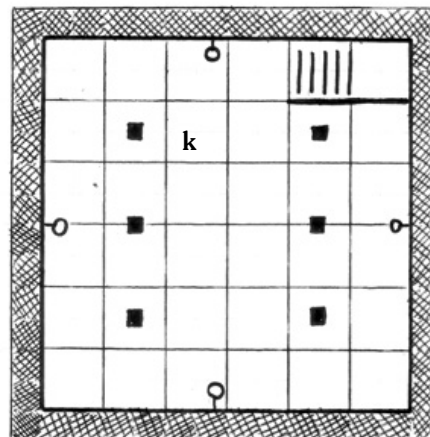
Please see Iridia 36 and 49 for more information about Kel Darbec.



Second Floor



First Floor



Cellar



Number 12 Guidry Street

Wood Walls: 6" thick, Break DC 20, Hardness 5, Hit Points 60 (per 10x10 section);

Front Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18;

Back Door (good wooden door): 1.5" thick, Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Open Lock DC 20, Break DC Stuck 16/Locked 18.

Key

one square = 5'

- a) Entry
- b) Parlor
- c) Dining Room
- d) Kitchen
- e) Office
- f) Bedroom
- g) Den
- h) Bedroom
- i) Bedroom
- j) Bedroom
- k) Cellar



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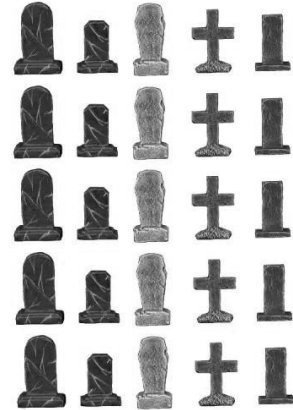
On Point

In issues 3, 8 and 10, I wrote about a terrain project I was working on. The goal was to build a ruined village called Brin, where noble knights stood their ground against relentless undead foes. One thing missing from the village were headstones to mark the graves of the fallen defenders.

I finally found a great collection on EBay for \$10 + s/h. I'll need to put them on bases and paint them, but I think they'll look great when finished. Perhaps when I get to work on the headstones I can present the project as an installment in my "I dream in 25mm." series.

Until next time, Christian

In addition to these headstones, Mega Miniatures makes a diverse line of products. There's something for everyone.



Iron Rations

basic d&d

Devon could no longer contain his curiosity. He finally worked up the courage and asked, "Aithne, why are you willing to help the halflings? Charity isn't normally something that motivates you."

"I could really care less about the halflings, Devon. I simply want to learn more about the human called Olwyn, who protects the spiders."

"What do you mean *learn more about*?" asked Abel.

"What do you think I mean, Abel?" Aithne flatly replied.

"I think you want to torch her like you did that freak we met in Haldane."

"Perhaps..."

The four companions wandered on in silence, each pondering the events to come. Apris seemed especially worried, wringing her hands and anxiously looking at Abel.

"Abel, why does Aithne want to fight the cleric?"

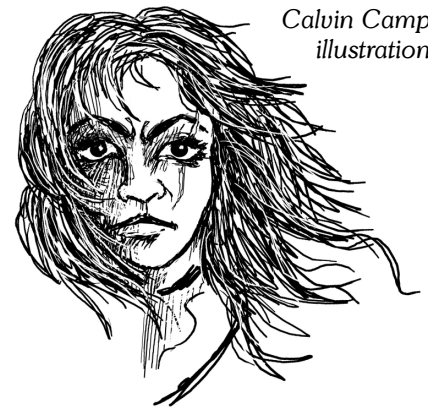
"I'm not sure, Apris. I can't say that Aithne wants to fight, but if it comes, she certainly won't walk away."

"I feel that by helping the halflings we're really helping Aithne to further her own agenda."

"Yeah, that's pretty much it." said Abel.

Meanwhile, the cleric Olwyn sat on a stump, watching intently as a spider wrapped a halfling in a silk cocoon. The halfling had stopped struggling and a stream of blood now oozed from the poor fellow's mouth and nostrils. Olwyn was detached from the event, simply viewing it as the ebb and flow of life. She had no idea that very soon an elven woman would engulf her in flames and would look at her charred corpse with equal apathy.

Please see Iridia 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 35, 51 and 59 for other installments of the Iron Rations series.



Calvin Camp
illustration

Olwyn, Level 2 Cleric; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 9, Int 12, Wis 15 (+1 magic-based saving throws), Dex 14 (+1 to hit, -1 AC bonus), Con 11, Ch 12; AC: 6 (leather armor, -1 dex); Hit Dice: 2; Hit Points: 9; Attacks: sling (+1 to hit, 1d4 damage); Move: 90'; Spells: Light; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 on initiative, turn undead; Equipment: sling, 12 sling stones, leather armor.

Faces in the Crowd

exploring the freelands of mirrym

by patrick lawinger

"Look, a book! I haven't read this one!"

Margaret Thorne

Margaret began life as the daughter of acrobats in a travelling circus, but her life was changed after a small carnival in Holsinger on Streele. At 10 years of age she was already beginning performances on the tight rope; however, it was her demonstration of a sharp mind and calm nature that impressed Warrick Light, a wizard living nearby.

She was able to quench a fire started by a panicked monkey by "copying what I'd seen a wizard do." Her utter calm while others panicked, and her ability to create a complex spell simply from having watched someone else cast it several times, convinced Warrick of her incredible potential. He convinced her parents that Margaret should remain behind as his apprentice and her life has been forever changed.

Always curious, Margaret revels in the many books in Warrick's library and is thrilled by her magical abilities. As Warrick's first apprentice, Margaret has received careful, individual training that few budding wizards could hope to obtain. At a mere 16 years old, Margaret is destined to become a powerful wizard.

Margaret keeps her pale blond hair tied in braids with bows or hair clips of some sort. She is thin, yet muscular, and her robes hang from her shoulders to brush against her legs as she walks, making Margaret look more like a child than a budding wizard of great power.

While few would call her beautiful, she has a winning smile and wonderful personality that attracts people to her. Her childhood as a performer has eliminated any fear she might have of rejection. Margaret's life so far has been devoted to knowledge; she takes a child-like delight in learning new facts, reading new books and casting a spell for the first time. Her enthusiasm for the study of magic is infectious; people walk away from conversations with her wondering why they never started studying magic themselves.

While most fledgling mages start out as hard-worked apprentices or pay huge sums of money to their mentors, Margaret has benefited from Warrick's incredible generosity and encouragement. Even though Margaret's enthusiasm has brought new life to Warrick's own magical studies, both of them know that it is time for her to move on. Warrick feels she needs to see the world and understand that knowledge gained from books must be tempered with the experience obtained from travel.

Margaret, on the other hand, is eager to explore and learn new things, something she knows she can't do studying in a tower. With the supplies and spells Warrick has given her, Margaret is ready for adventure and exploration.



Rene Brandt
illustration

Margaret Thorne, female human Wiz3; Medium humanoid (5' 6", 110 lbs); CR 3; HD 3d4+3; hp 11; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AL LG; *Armor:* AC 12 (+2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2;

Melee: Dagger +2 (+1 BAB, +1 str) (d4+1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5.

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 12 (+1), Int 16 (+3), Wis 15 (+2), Cha 14 (+2).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Knowledge (arcane) +7, Listen +5, Spellcraft +8, Spot +5, Tumble +3; Alertness, Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.

Spells (4/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level, 0% arcane spell failure chance): 0-Acid Splash, Detect Magic, Light, Mage Hand; 1-Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Sleep; 2-Tasha's Hideous Laughter, Web.

Possessions: Elixir of hiding, Heward's handy haversack, blanket, wine skin, bullseye lantern, 2 flasks of oil, 50 ft. of silk rope, 3 days of trail rations, bar of soap, 10 gp, 50 gp gem.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I finally decided to come out of my shell. I've announced a new campaign at a few message boards and am hopeful for a good response. For a long time, I got hung up on my inability to recreate the campaigns I played with my life-long friends. I think I've accepted the fact that those games and friends are long gone. I can either not play and only have those old memories to hold onto or I can try to build some new friendships. On the back page are some maps I put together for my first session. Perhaps you can gain some inspiration from them. I'll discuss the maps in a bit more detail in this week's podcast, so do be sure to check it out.

Until next time, Christian

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

Number four in the Dungeon Crawl Classics series from Joseph Goodman Games, *Bloody Jack's Gold* offers 10th-12th level PCs an immense pile of gold if they are successful; however, they'll pay dearly for it. No doubt, PCs will be asking themselves if their new found wealth is really worth it.

The set up for the module is simple enough. The characters acquire a treasure map tattooed on tanned human skin. The map leads to the treasure trove of a notorious pirate named Bloody Jack Dascombe. While the adventure appears to be straight forward, there is quite a bit happening beneath the surface.

The underground chambers hiding the treasure are controlled by the ghost of Bloody Jack's former compatriot, a cleric named Coyopultec. Coyopultec has spent a great deal of time and energy arranging a variety of devious traps and stocking the tunnels with all kinds of vicious monsters. Coyopultec is aided by an imp named Grishnaz. The imp has his own agenda. During the adventure—when characters are at their weakest—he encourages them to sell their souls in exchange for tips on how to survive the hellish dungeon.

Characters will have to deal with their success, should they survive. Coyopultec's ghost is rather resilient and he may rise again to torment the PCs. Bloody Jack's ghost is also said to haunt the oceans and he may not be too pleased about the stealing of his treasure. Also, Grishnaz the imp's devilish masters would be furious if the souls they've become accustomed to receiving suddenly stopped showing up. Finally, the treasure itself is a challenge. How exactly are PCs supposed to transport tens of thousands of gold coins?

Even if you don't play this module, it's an entertaining read. The module's author, Joe Crow, writes in a conversational, witty tone. When describing a monster he writes, *"Picture a bowlful of bubbling, boiling, brownish snot, covered with glaring eyes and mouths filled with sharp teeth, all snapping at you, babbling insane nonsense and spitting acid in your face, while trying to eat you. Now, make it the size of an SUV. There's your gibbering moulder."*

All in all, *Bloody Jack's Gold* offers some great twists on the tried and true treasure map adventure hook.

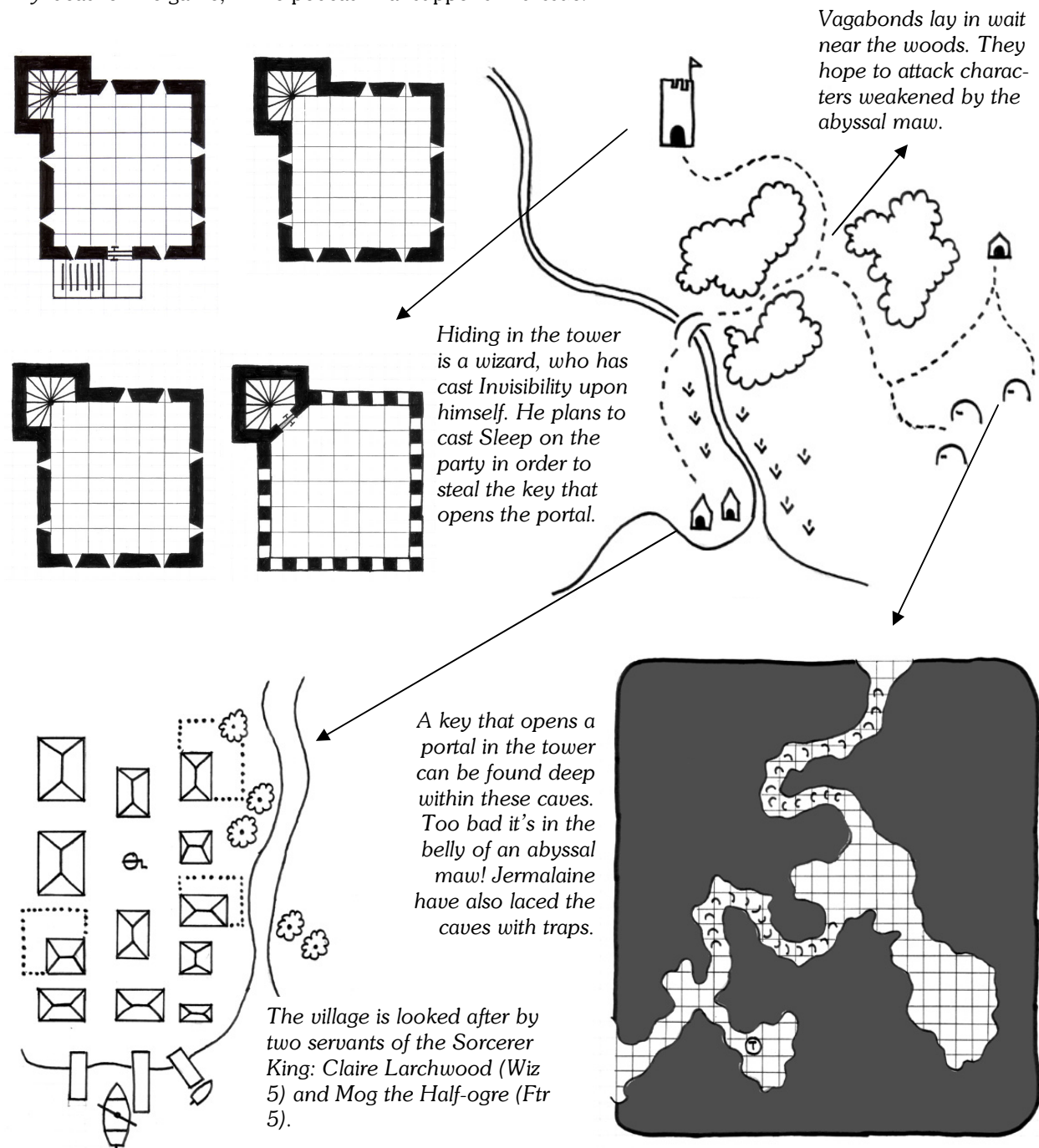


Bloody Jack's Gold will have PCs wondering if piles of gold are really worth the effort.

Actual Play: Quest of the Sorcerer King

d&d 3.5

Below are some maps for the first session of a new campaign I am planning. I'll discuss each one, along with my ideas for the game, in the podcast that supports this issue.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Dodger games kept me company while working on this issue. I love April because it means mellow evenings listening to Vin Scully call balls and strikes. If you aren't familiar with Vin Scully, he's pretty much a living legend here in Los Angeles. Listening to him announce games is like hanging out with your grandfather. It's pretty cool.

Game-wise, one of my students recently drew a nifty robot and it inspired me to write a GURPS article. GURPS 4e is probably one of the games I'll never get a chance to play, but I sure wish that I could. I've also got a new installment in the Iron Rations series. Meet Arkon the Enchanter, a new patron for the heroes. Do be sure to send any questions or comments to me at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Iron Rations

basic d&d

Despite their comfortable accommodations, Abel was furious.

He, Apris, Devon and Aithne had found a quaint village and decided to stay a few days for rest and recuperation. Although they did not speak of it, the encounter with Olwyn the Cleric weighed heavily on their minds. They had booked some nice rooms at a cozy inn and were settling down for a nice evening.

That's when the local wizard walked in. Charismatic, intelligent and worldly, he wasted no time in attempting to charm Apris. (Aithne found him boorish and retired to her room.) Apris was awed by the wizard's exploits and hung on his every word. They sat by the fire, sipping brandy, while Devon and Abel looked on from across the room.

"Who the hell does this guy think he is?" hissed Abel.

"I think he said his name was Arkon the Enchanter," replied Devon.

"I don't care what he calls himself. I'm going to kick his ass." Abel got up and walked toward Arkon, fists balled.

"Oh, Abel, I'm so glad you joined us," said Arkon, looking up from his glass. "I was just telling Apris that you and your friends would be perfect for a task I need completed. I can pay you well."

"What?" asked Abel. Impatient, he continued. "Listen, friend, I don't care about your task or your gold. I just want to go to bed and I'm taking Apris with me." Looking to Apris, he said, "Let's go."

"You are being rude!" exclaimed Apris. "Arkon has a lot to offer us and you are spoiling everything!"

His voice rising in anger, Abel spat, "Apris, get your butt upstairs. I'm not in the mood for this."

Embarrassed, Arkon stood up and said, "I'll leave you two to your dispute. Perhaps we'll talk in the morning."

"Don't bet on it," shot Abel.

Ignoring the comment, Arkon walked for the door. Apris and Abel's argument grew more and more heated and Devon could only shake his head in disbelief. Hoping to salvage the night, he hurried out after Arkon, calling as he went. "Wait! Wait! I assure you that we can complete any task you need! Please, wait!"

Arkon the Enchanter, Level 5

Magic User; Alignment: Neutral;
Abilities: Str 11, Int 16, Wis 15 (+1 on magic-based saving throws), Dex 12, Con 9, Ch 14 (+1 adjustment to reactions), AC 9 (ring of protection +1); Hit Dice 5; Hit Points 12; Attacks: dagger (d4); Move: 90'; Spells: Sleep, Shield, Invisibility, Web, Fireball; Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarven; Equipment: Ring of Protection +1, Wand of Paralyzation (5 charges), dagger, 20 gp.

This weekend I saw a big robot.

gurps 4e

Every Monday morning I ask my students to draw a picture about what they did over the weekend and to share it with the class. Nelly produced a colorful illustration of a large, hulking robot.

"What's that?" I asked.

"It's the big robot I saw in the alley behind our apartment."

"Really?"

"Yeah. It was really big and it kicked a trash can that was in the way and it really scared me."

"I'm sorry you were afraid. Did you see where it went?"

"No. It just went down the alley and some guys came running after it but I don't know what happened because I had to brush my teeth."

"Well, okay then. Thank you for sharing."

I tend to take my students' weekend stories at face value. There's a lot of weird stuff in this city and this isn't the first time a student has spotted an out of control robot*.

I have got to figure out where these things are coming from!

*Iridia 11



Nelly's Robot (167 points)

SM 0 (7' tall, 350 lbs.);

ST 23 [130], DX 10, IQ 7 [-60], HT 12 [20];

HP 23, Will 7, Per 10 [15], FP NA;

Basic Lift 180, Damage: Thr 2d+1/Sw 4d+1;

Basic Speed 5.5, Basic Move 5;

Dodge 5, Parry (see attacks), Block -;

DR 6.

Advantages and Perks

Damage Resistance 6 [30], Digital Mind [5], Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30], Infravision [10], Injury Tolerance (no blood/ unliving) [25], Lifting Strength 7 [21], Night Vision 7 [7], Pressure Support 1 [5], Radiation Tolerance 20 [20], Tech Level 9 [5], Telecommunication (infrared) [10], Temperature Tolerance 3 [3], Unfazeable [15], Vacuum Support [5].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dependency* (very common -5, constantly x5) [-25], Disturbing Voice [-10], Electrical [-20], Hidebound [-5], Incurious (6) [-10], Low Empathy [-20], Maintenance (1 person, weekly) [-5], No Sense of Humor [-10], Reprogrammable [-10], Slave Mentality [-40], Unhealing [-30].

Skills

Brawling-11 [2], Throwing-11 [4]

Attacks

Punch-11, 2d cr, reach C, parry 8.

*The robot has a battery pack that can run for 8 hours on a single charge. The robot can plug itself into a wall socket for 2 hours to re-charge.

Nelly's rendition of the robot



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I hosted the first session of my new D&D 3.5 campaign last weekend and it went very well. I wrote up the session notes and have presented them on the back page. I'll also share additional insights in the supporting podcast.

In other gaming news, my wife surprised me with four Dungeon Crawl Classics from Goodman Games. This pleases me greatly, since I can continue reviewing the series. My latest effort appears below. Enjoy the issue and drop me a line with any questions or comments at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

Aerie of the Crow God, by Andrew Hind, is a noteworthy addition to the Dungeon Crawl Classics line from Goodman Games. Designed for character levels 7-9, **Aerie of the Crow God** was nominated for the Best Adventure award at the 2004 GenCon ENnies.

When the characters arrive in the hamlet of Carnelloe, they find that all is not well. Lady Pendour has recently been assaulted by an unknown villain and the lives of her children have been threatened. The stranger demands the key to a lock box belonging to Lady Pendour's late husband. Unfortunately, Lord Pendour was recently slain while clearing the nearby fortress of Gurnard's Head of vile harpies. The key was on his person and his corpse has yet to be retrieved. It is up to the PCs to travel to the ancient fortress and return with the key before it's too late.

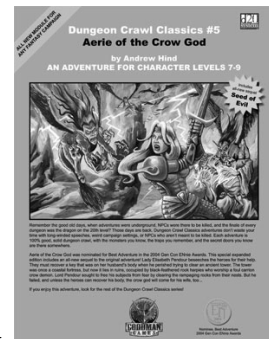
Once the party reaches Gurnard's Head, they are assaulted by a filthy variety of harpy called a rook, as well as cultists devoted to Malotoch, the Carrion Crow Goddess. As the adventure progresses, the PCs will learn the sad history of the ruins and how Malotoch's followers assumed control of the place. Long ago, the fortress was besieged. In order to survive, the starving defenders resorted to cannibalism. Malotoch took note of the savagery and cursed the place with her influence.

Also, the characters will discover the presence of enchanted weapons called the Star Arms. During the siege one of the defenders - a wizard named Icen - arranged to have a meteorite that had fallen in the area brought to the fortress. From the meteorite he crafted several weapons to aid the defenders. Sadly, his work was in vain and all of the brave warriors either fell to their ghoulish comrades or voluntarily succumbed to madness.

In addition to the mystery, **Aerie of the Crow God** offers a bit of role-playing. Lord Pendour's key - the one the PCs must retrieve - is in the possession of a wererat named Hornauer. Hornauer is selfish and cares little for the cultists nor Lady Pendour. He can be negotiated with, however. Working with Hornauer might provide the party with some valuable information.

The battle at the end of the module is quite challenging and characters should have advanced one or two levels before having to square off with the cult's high priest. A DM might want to prepare a detailed battle mat and custom minis for such an important scene. Also provided in this adventure is a follow-up scenario called **The Seed of Evil**. It details the further spread of Malotoch's cult. Of note is the demi-goddess' stat block. She's a CR 17 encounter, so perhaps the PCs can battle her at a later date, maybe as part of a campaign climax.

In summary, Andrew Hind's **Aerie of the Crow God** is an excellent adventure with an intriguing backstory and plenty of opportunities for hack and slash.



Actual Play: Quest of the Sorcerer King

d&d 3.5

In Iridia 61 I introduced a new campaign I was planning. We held our first session recently (hooray!) and I thought I'd share the outcome. I'll also provide a few additional notes in the supporting podcast.

Session 1; April 6, 2008

Arriving in the village of Bourne aboard the Maiden of the Mist, a ship that can travel through the Ethereal, Gehko, Llieron and Vaidno began learning as much about the area as they could. They met with Mog, the village's half-ogre constable, as well as Claire Larchwood, a former apprentice of the Sorcerer King. From Mog and Claire they learned a few of the village's laws. Namely, the wooded areas north of the village were off limits. The party was also advised against exploring the nearby marsh.

The party soon traveled north, since they were told by villagers that a tower beyond the woods contained a portal to another domain. En route, they encountered four vagabonds. (EL 1) The vagabonds attempted to rob the party, but they were easily defeated. Gehko proved to be rather accurate with his crossbow and Vaidno managed to grapple two of the brigands into submission! The surviving brigands were delivered to Mog. Out of gratitude, Claire Larchwood told the party that they would need to explore some caves to the east. To do so would be vital to their quest.

Within the caves, the party encountered a few traps. (2 x CR 1) They sensed that the traps were set by some mischievous creature, which dogged their steps and mocked their progress. Eventually, they reached the bowels of the cave complex and battled an Abyssal Maw. (CR 2) The Maw succumbed to multiple arrow wounds and regurgitated the key needed to open the portal in the tower. In fact, the Maw's gullet held two copies of the key, evidence that the Sorcerer King had spread multiple copies of the gate key about his realm.

The party's next stop was the tower. They entered and soon found the portal. As they opened the gateway, however, they fell victim to a magical attack launched by an invisible assailant. Earlier, the party had been told of a greasy, scrawny wizard lurking about. They could only assume he was their attacker. The unseen villain stole one of their copies of the key, but fortunately they were left with the other. The session closed with the party opening the gate for a second time, then stepping through.

Based upon the ELs, the party earned 1,500 xp. Divided among the three characters, that resulted in 500 xp each. The party managed to walk away with the following treasure: 3 x everburning torches, a Darkwood shield, a *Sleep* arrow and 50 gp. They also found a potion of *Hide From Animals*, but it was quaffed in the hopes that it was some kind of healing potion.



The Abyssal May lays dead on the floor of the cave. It was summoned by the Sorcerer King to guard the key that opens the gate in the tower.

The Intrepid Heroes

Llieron; Elven Rgr1

played by rod

Llieron has ventured forth to learn about the world beyond his forest home. Uncomfortable among humans, he prefers quiet, natural places, as well as the companionship of his demi-human friends.

Gehko Bindus; Hafling Rog1

played by izzy

Gehko shares many qualities characteristic of his race. Resourceful and inquisitive, Gehko keeps a keen eye peeled for any opportunity to make a profit.

Vaidno; 1/2 Elf Brd1

played by andy

Forget about a dandy clad in silk, strumming a lute. Vaidno is a warrior poet. Carrying a sword - and with a bow at the ready - Vaidno would rather sing of his own heroic exploits than recount the deeds of others.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I'm pretty meticulous when it comes to planning for my campaign. When the PCs face an NPC in combat, I have prepared in advance by writing up a detailed stat block. Taking the time to select each feat, skill and ability score helps me to visualize the NPC. However, doing so takes a lot of time. It also takes a lot of time to write this zine. To make my life easier, I think I'll combine my campaign prep with my Iridia efforts.

To that end, I present two new columns: Rogues Gallery and Maps of Mystery. Both column titles are an homage to earlier forms of D&D. Rogues Gallery was the name of an NPC compilation for AD&D 1e, while Maps of Mystery was a regularly appearing feature in Dungeon mag. Both columns will offer material that I will be using in my own campaign, but might also be useful in yours.

Until next time, Christian

Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

"Mock me while you can, fools. In time I will gain enough power to burn your souls!"

Jasper Genz

Jasper was ejected from his master's tutelage after he attempted to steal a fellow student's spellbook. Jasper was hated by the other apprentices prior to this infraction, so no one mourned his dismissal. Afterward, Jasper fell in with a number of rouges and mercenaries of low moral character.

Jasper is selfish, caustic and hard to be around for any length of time. Despite these social shortcomings, Jasper is an emerging expert in planar knowledge. He has read extensively on the subject and knows a great deal about the Great Wheel, despite his modest experience.

He hopes to join a party of explorers and travel beyond the Prime Material in order to acquire wealth and experience. Of course, Jasper will not hesitate to betray his companions if it would benefit him.

When it comes to combat, Jasper prefers evasion. He will cast *Sleep* or *Daze* to pacify opponents, then flee at his full movement rate. If pursued, he will use his Hide and Move Silently skills to avoid detection. If cornered, he will cast *Magic Missile* and *Ray of Frost*, then will use his *Invisibility* scroll to make a final attempt at escape.

Jasper Genz, male human Wiz2; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 130 lbs); CR 2; HD 2d4; hp 6; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 12 (+2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +0;

Melee: Dagger +0 (+1 BAB, -1 str) (d4-1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5.

Abilities: Str 9 (-1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 10, Int 17 (+3), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Concentrate +3, Craft (alchemy) +5, Decipher Script +5, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcane) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Move Silently +6, Spellcraft +7; Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (knowledge—the planes), Stealthy.

Spells (4/3; save DC 13 + spell level, 0% arcane spell failure chance): 0-*Daze*, *Detect Magic*, *Light*, *Ray of Frost*; 1-*Shield*, *Magic Missile*, *Sleep*.

Possessions: Elixir of Sneaking, Potion of *Mage Armor*, Scroll with *Invisibility*, 5 x 20 gp gems, 50 gp, spellbook* that contains all of his known spells in addition to *Read Magic* and *Identify*, backpack, blanket, wineskin, hooded lantern, flint and steel, dagger, 1 flask of oil.

*Jasper's spellbook is a standard 100 page book. His spells take up 9 pages. Therefore, the book could be sold for 450 gp.

Maps of Mystery

d&d 3.5

The keep below would make an excellent stronghold for a Fighter PC, robber baron or a holy order of knights. Its sturdy construction would ensure that it could withstand most mundane threats, although ethereal invaders and those employing *Teleport* would find little to hamper their intrusion.

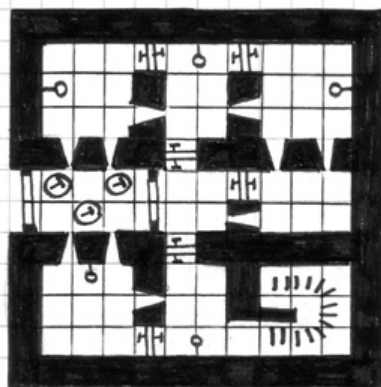
The first floor features two heavy wooden gates secured with thick beams. Beyond the first set of doors are three pits—5' wide and 10' deep—that would pose an obstacle for enemies. When the keep is not under assault, the pits could be covered with planks to allow safe passage. Numerous arrow slits would also allow defenders to harry anyone breaching the gates.

Murder holes can be found on the second floor. The holes overlook the pits and gates below. Falling into a pit, then being peppered with arrows, might deter even the most aggressive invader.

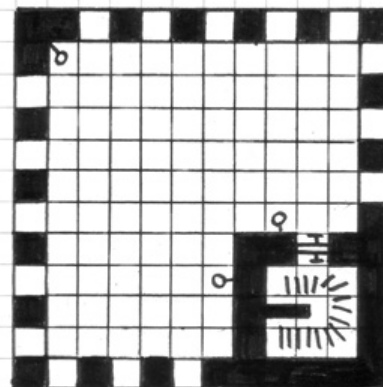
The open space on the fourth floor could house at least two catapults or perhaps a single trebuchet. Battlements also provide cover for archers.

The sixth floor offers the keep an excellent vantage point. It is accessible via a hatch in the floor.

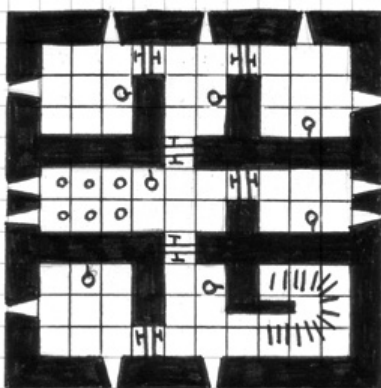
A larger version of this map can be found at the Iridia website.



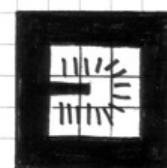
First Floor



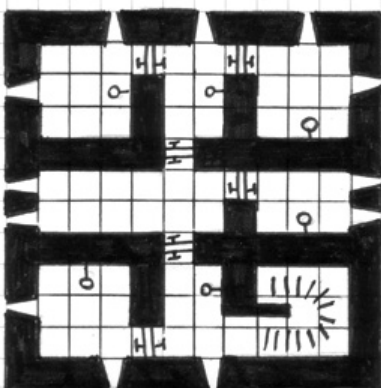
Fourth Floor



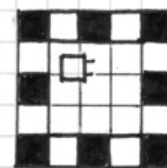
Second Floor



Fifth Floor



Third Floor



Sixth Floor

The walls of the keep are 5' thick and constructed entirely of stone. The floors and ceilings are built with wood. All interior doors are good quality and most can be secured with a wooden bar. Torch sconces are placed at regular intervals to provide adequate illumination.

The arrow slits in the walls can be covered with interior shutters. The DM can decide how each room is used, although the kitchen would most likely be found on the first floor. Latrines would also be found on the first level. The waste could be disposed of via leach lines.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

The second session of my D&D 3.5 campaign went very well. The only hiccup was some confusion among the party when it came to tactics, but that was soon sorted out. As a former wargamer, I always appreciate it when the PCs work together in a tactically sound manner. Simple things, like concentrating attacks on a single foe, throwing a javelin or spear before closing with an enemy and never fighting alone can have such a big impact on a party's combat effectiveness. I guess that's one of the things I love about D&D—it's a nice combination of role-playing and squad-level wargame.

Last issue I introduced two new columns: Rogues Gallery and Maps of Mystery. I think I'll use those columns as a way to share maps and NPCs from my campaign instead of the Actual Play series I started in Iridia 63. While some folks enjoy reading about other people's campaigns, others do not. I think Maps of Mystery and Rogues Gallery will allow me to share campaign details without boring some of my readers.

Until next time, Christian

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

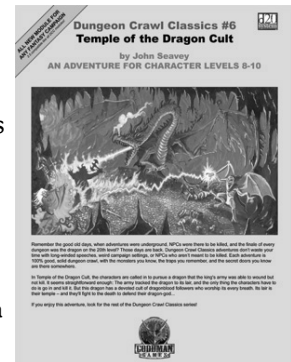
Temple of the Dragon Cult by John Seavey is an exciting adventure for 8th-10th level characters. Published by Goodman Games, it is the sixth module in the *Dungeon Crawl Classics* series. (Seventh if you count DCC #0.) *Temple of the Dragon Cult* requires PCs to pursue a wounded red dragon into its lair. The dragon recently savaged a small army and the surviving soldiers have turned to the party for aid. PCs might expect a wounded dragon to be easily slain, but they'd be wrong.

The dragon, named *Pyraxus*, has made his lair inside a mountain peak that once housed a clan of dwarves. In addition to the dragon, PCs will face stiff opposition from *Pyraxus'* fanatical followers. The dragon's minions have all been infused with his blood during a bizarre ritual. The rite involves casting a spell called *Dragon Kin*, which is detailed at the end of the module. The dragon-blooded followers will pose a formidable challenge for the party, since the NPCs will have character classes combined with a potent breath weapon.

In addition to the dragon and its cult, the mountain lair is home to ropyers, rust monsters and humanoids. All of these creatures were living in the mountain before *Pyraxus* arrived. The author, John Seavey, does a good job integrating them into the module. For example, a pair of aforementioned rust monsters will be terrified of the PCs, since members of the cult hunt them relentlessly. (The cultists worry that the rust monsters will devour the dragon's hoard.)

The author provides helpful suggestions on how to run each combat encounter. The monster and NPC tactics are carefully detailed. The excellent maps, stat blocks, illustrations and handouts should all facilitate play.

My only critique is that the NPCs, monsters and dragon are too static in their tactics. Due to the difficulty of the encounters, PCs will most likely make multiple forays into *Pyraxus'* lair. This will allow the party to heal, memorize spells and face each encounter at full strength. Instead of passively waiting for the PCs to attack, the cultists should create defensive barriers around *Pyraxus*, as well as planning ambushes. Perhaps they could even drive the humanoids out of the mountain and into the characters' camp in a desperate counter-attack. Furthermore, *Pyraxus*, who is wounded at the beginning of the adventure, should be allowed to re-



cover hit points from resting. Since one of the cultists is a cleric, a few healing spells might also be in order.

Despite this minor nitpick, Temple of the Dragon Cult is a well-designed, exciting module. I especially like the cover art, which depicts Pyraxus and one of his minions annihilating a party of adventurers.

Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

"Gimme yer gold!"

Kanan Half-man

Kanan Half-man is a degenerate. Angry and violent, Kanan spends most of his time drinking, bullying others and stealing from anyone he can. Kanan realizes he's not going to live to an advanced age, so he squeezes as much out of life as he can. Sadly for those around him, this lust for life generally involves murder and robbery.

Kanan wields a two-handed club studded with large spikes. His tactics have few subtleties. He simply hammers a foe until it's dead. Kanan often gets carried away when smashing enemies. If he drops a target, Kanan must make a Will save (DC 10) to disengage. If Kanan fails, he will strike another blow at his fallen foe. For most victims, this proves fatal.

Kanan can be used as a thug to harry the PCs in your campaign. He can be encountered alone or as part of a gang of robbers.

Kanan Half-man, male half-orc War2; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 190 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d8+9; hp 17; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL NE;

Armor: AC 12 (+2 leather armor), touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +5;

Melee: Greatclub +5 (+2 BAB, +3 str) (d10+4, x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 17 (+3), Dex 11, Con 16 (+3), Int 8 (-1), Wis 9 (-1), Cha 6 (-2).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Jump +5, Swim +4; Toughness.

Possessions: Greatclub, leather armor, bottle of cheap rum.

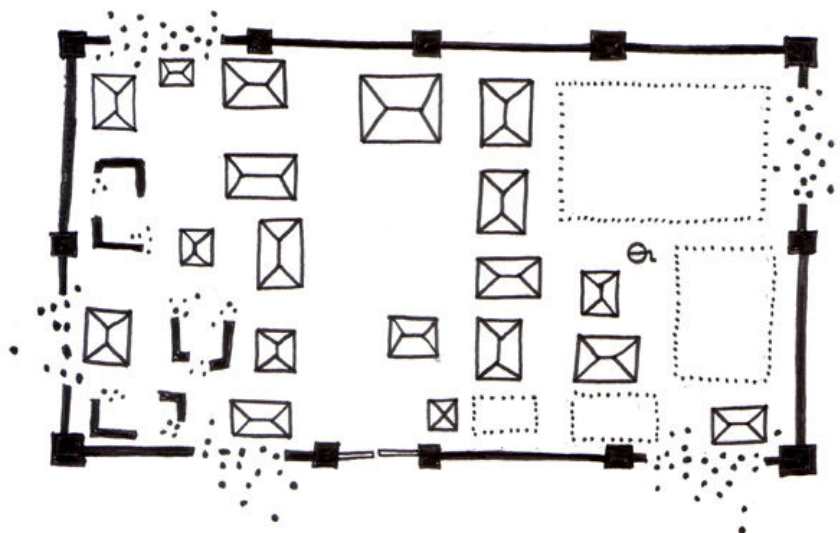
Maps of Mystery

d&d 3.5

The village below is in a sad state of decay. The 5' walls are crumbling and the wooden gates are barely hanging from their rusted hinges. Inside the failing walls are miserable stone cottages. The remnants of the thatched roofs are gradually blowing away in the wind. Stagnant water fills the well and the garden plots are overrun with weeds.

In my own campaign, the village houses the refugees of a society scoured by abyssal hordes. There is nothing but ashen waste and polluted skies as far as the eye can see. At night, Abyssal Skulkers prowl the streets looking for easy prey.

A larger version of this map can be found at the Iridia website.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've been following the daily 4e previews very closely at Wizards.com. Despite the many changes to classes and the addition of *at will*, *per day* and *per encounter* abilities, I expect the new game will run very smoothly. For example, the stat blocks for powerful creatures are easy to read. I think that running them in combat will be much less of a headache than in 3.5.

This week's Rogues Gallery column offers three elven NPCs from my campaign. These fellows don't go looking for a fight, but they have no problem shafting good-aligned PCs if the situation dictates. I'm also excited to share some Dwarven Forge dungeon tiles with you. Thank you, federal government, for giving me some of my tax money back. I put the cash to good use.

Finally, I'd like to give a big thanks to Matt Borselli of the 1001 Nights and 1 Night zine, as well as Cartography Unlimited for RPGs. Matt nominated Iridia for an ENnie, while Cartography Unlimited gave some PayPal love to this humble rag. Thanks!

Until next time, Christian

Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

"I'm sorry we killed your friend, but the sign clearly warned you about trespassing."

Saeros

Lenwe, Saeros and Aerith are tasked with keeping intruders out of the forest in which they live. The instructions from their superiors are very simple: shoot anything that comes into the forest. Since they do have scruples, they will warn trespassers to turn back before opening fire. They will not debate, answer questions or act as guides. Leave or get shot. It's really that simple.

In combat, the elves will cast *True Strike*, fire from cover, then flee. To increase their arrows' effectiveness, they all fire at the same target. They will then return and get back into firing position using Hide and Move Silently. If their opponent proves dangerous, the elves will use *Expeditious Retreat* to escape.

In my campaign, Lenwe, Saeros and Aerith were played as cold and distant, with few kind words for outsiders. While their alignment in relation to their clan might be Chaotic Good, their treatment of strangers is Neutral at best. In your campaign, the elves could be used as potential rivals or even allies depending on your game.

Lenwe, Saeros or Aerith, male elf Sor2/Ftr2/Exp2; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 140 lbs); CR 5; HD 2d4+2d10+2d6+6; hp 26; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 15 (+3 leather armor +1, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +4, Grp +5;

Melee: Shortsword +6 (+4 BAB, +1 str, +1 mw shortsword) (d6+1, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Shortbow +8 (+4 BAB, +2 dex, +1 weapon focus, +1 shortbow +1) (d6+1/ x3).

Saves: Fort +3 , Ref +4, Will +5.

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 15 (+2), Con 12 (+1), Int 15 (+2), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 16 (+3).

Languages: Common, elven, gnoll, sylvan.

Special Abilities: Low-Light Vision, elven traits.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Climb +2, Concentrate +5, Hide +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +7, Spellcraft +6, Spot +5, Survival +5, Swim +2; Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (short bow).

Spells Known (5/2): 0-Daze, Detect Magic, Disrupt Undead, Message, Read Magic; 1-Expeditious Retreat, True Strike.

Spells Available (6/5): save DC 13 + spell level, 10% arcane spell failure chance).

Possessions: +1 leather armor, +1 short bow, Cloak of Elvenkind, masterwork shortsword.

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Way back in Iridia 11 I wrote an article on the use of chart paper tablets with a 1" grid from Staples. I extolled their affordability, convenience and ease of use. This week I'd like to talk about a higher-budget tool for dungeon mapping.

Dwarven Forge (dwarvenforge.com) produces a line of dungeon tiles that are exquisite in detail. Each piece is cast from resin and is beautifully hand-painted. The tiles include a 1" grid that makes them ideal for D&D.

I got started with the Room and Passage set (SKU: MM-002), which retails for \$109.00 + S/H. This set is a great entry point into the product line, but it clearly isn't cheap. When the box arrived, I eagerly unpacked the contents and found enough pieces to make a small dungeon. The map at right is the blue-print I worked from.

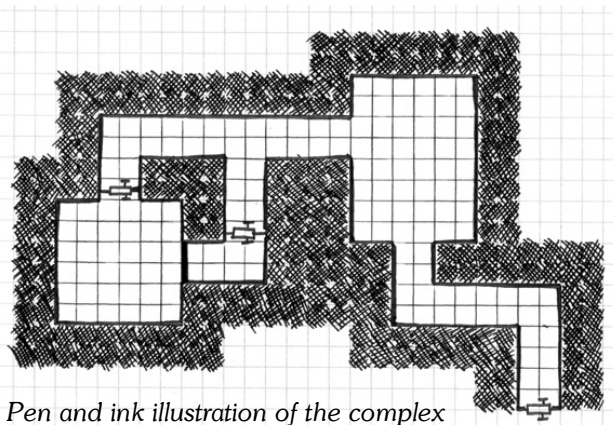
I found that the dungeon tiles fit very nicely together. Each piece has felt affixed to its bottom, so this should prevent the tiles from sliding during play. The doors included in the set swing open and really add a nice look to the dungeon.

As I was placing a few miniatures on the tiles to see how they looked, I noticed that the walls in the hallways might pose some problems. While the squares on the tiles are 1" in width and should therefore accommodate 25mm miniatures, the reality is that most minis are 28-30mm in size. This means that a larger figure exceeds its 1" space and may cramp the other pieces around it, in addition to not being able to fit against an adjacent wall.

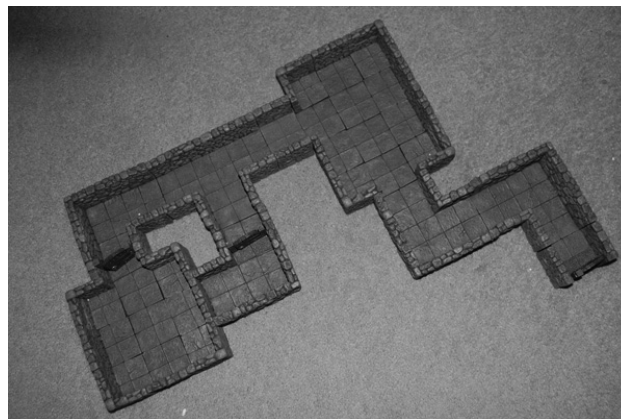
The other problem I encountered is that the room and passage set provides quite a few passages, but not enough corner pieces and floor tiles to build more than two or three small rooms. I think that seven corner and intersection pieces are a few too many. Basically, you are going to have to buy two \$109 room and passage sets to make a decent-sized dungeon. I certainly plan on buying another set, but this might be a bit much for many people's budgets.

Another factor to consider is that the DM will have to figure out how to present the dungeon during play. Will he build each room as the players enter or assemble the whole dungeon beforehand, then let the players wonder at what each room might contain? Either approach will add extra time to game play or prep.

All in all, the Dwarven Forge dungeon tiles are beautiful, but that beauty comes at a steep price.



Pen and ink illustration of the complex the characters would fight their way through. Below is the Dwarven Forge version of the map in all of its 3D glory.



components of the Room and Passage set



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Iridia

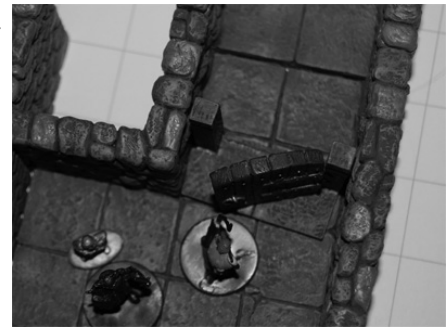
role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

In the past, I've run my campaigns with no end in sight. The PCs simply meandered through the setting, hacking and slaying with no real purpose. In my current game I predetermined a finale, in addition to the number of sessions the campaign would last. I really like the way things are going and am upset at myself for not doing this sort of thing before. Beginning with the end in mind has really allowed myself and the players to focus. If you'd like, you can follow our progress at IridiaZine.net/quest.htm. Last session, we used the Dwarven Forge dungeon tiles I reviewed in Iridia 66 (see photo at right) and they worked great!

This week I have two NPCs from my campaign to share with you. Both are Neutral in alignment, so they might make better allies than enemies. There was going to be a third, but his stat block just wouldn't fit in this issue. Oh well. Maybe next week. As always, please listen to this week's podcast for more news and insights about this issue.

Until next time, Christian



The intrepid heroes hide in a room until a pack of hyenas and their gnoll leader pass.

Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

"I'm not really looking for a fight. But if you want one, you've got it."

Colin Crabbe

Colin began his fighting career as a soldier in a mercenary army. He survived many difficult campaigns, rising through the ranks from footman to officer. Eventually, he grew weary of risking his life in conflicts he cared little about. Deciding it was time to fight for himself, Colin began making his way as an adventurer. To this end, he has invested most of his money in superior arms and armor.

Because Colin's alignment is neutral, he has little animosity toward anyone or anything. He just wants to earn some gold in order to enjoy a decent life when he retires. Colin will not harm innocents, but this nonviolence doesn't necessarily extend to everyone of good alignment. Colin will not back down from a fight if his goals run contrary to those of good-aligned PCs. When faced with such a dilemma, Colin will try to bluff or intimidate his way out of a battle.

In melee, Colin favors a trip attack against weaker foes. If he succeeds in the trip attempt, he will use power attack to deliver a punishing blow. If he is in

Colin Crabbe, male human Ftr3; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 170 lbs); CR 3; HD 3d10+6; hp 26; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 17 (+6 mw banded mail, +1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 16.

Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +6;

Melee: Halberd +8 (+3 BAB, +3 str, +1 mw halberd, +1 weapon focus) (d10+3, /x3);

Spiked gauntlet +7 (+3 BAB, +3 str, +1 mw spiked gauntlet) (d3+3, /x2);

Dagger +6 (+3 BAB, +3 str) (d4+3, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 13 (+1), Con 14 (+2), Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12 (+1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +1, Climb +4 (-1 in armor), Hide +2 (-3 in armor), Intimidate +2, Jump +4 (-1 in armor), Listen +1, Move Silently +2 (-3 in armor), Search +1, Spot +1, Swim +4 (-1 in armor); Cleave, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (halberd).

Possessions: Masterwork halberd, masterwork spiked gauntlets, masterwork banded mail, dagger, 50 gp, 3 x 50 gp gems.

danger of being tripped himself, he will drop his halberd and either punch with his spiked gauntlets or draw his dagger.

"You seem nice, but magic is the only thing I trust."
Madeline Ginnever

Madeline abhors violence. As a result, she is often uncomfortable around heavily armed individuals. She prefers diplomacy, bluffing or even deceit to open conflict. Ironically, it's Madeline's penchant for deception that often lands her in heated confrontations.

If it was up to Madeline, she'd spend her days living in a comfortable home, studying new spells and crafting magic items. However, the power to create such items, as well as the gold to afford a nice home, can only come from taking risks. Realizing this, Madeline has ventured out in search of experience, gold and power. Along the way, Madeline has made some friends, but angered an equal number of former companions. While some find her beauty and intelligence enchanting, others are turned off by her emotional distance and self-preservation instinct.

If forced into a fight, Madeline will attempt to flee or seek cover. She will cast spells to aid her party, but only from a distance and in a stingy manner. Madeline would much rather cast a 0 level spell, such as *Daze*, than use a higher level spell like *Tasha's Hideous Laughter*. It makes little sense, but then again, Madeline is full of contradictions.

Madeline Ginnever, female human Wiz4; Medium humanoid (5' 6", 110 lbs); CR 4; HD 4d4; hp 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +1;

Melee: Dagger +1 (+2 BAB, -1 str) (d4-1, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1*, Ref +2*, Will +6*.

Abilities: Str 9 (-1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 10, Int 16 (+3), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 16 (+3).

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic, Dwarven.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +3, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +4; Brew Potion, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Spells (4/4/3; save DC 13* + spell level, 0% arcane spell failure chance): 0-*Daze* x2, *Detect Magic*, *Light*; 1-*Charm Person*, *Hypnotism*, *Magic Missile*, *Sleep*; 2-*Daze Monster*, *Tasha's Hideous Laughter*, *Invisibility*.

*Add +1 to DC for enchantment spells.

Possessions: Elixir of Love, Cloak of Resistance +1, scroll with *Feather Fall* and *Mage Armor*, spellbook with all memorized spells including *Read Magic* and *Identify*, dagger, 20 gp.

* Add +1 to saves if Madeline is wearing her Cloak of Resistance.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
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On Point

When I play D&D I like to use lots of terrain and miniatures. Certainly the rules facilitate/encourage/require the use of a battle mat, but I find that my enjoyment goes beyond a clear determination of AOOs, cover, line of sight, etc. I like minis because they really allow me to focus my imagination. Some might argue that minis and terrain inhibit the mindscape, but the opposite is true for me. By creating a universe in miniature on the table, I can tune out the real world and get lost in moving my little orcs and goblins around the dungeon.

With that in mind, I wanted to try something new for a recent session - multi-level terrain! I started off with a dungeon level using my Dwarven Forge dungeon tiles. (dwarvenforge.com) I combined two sets, Room and Passage (see Iridia 66) and the Narrow Passages. The tiles were used to represent a meandering set of hallways and rooms built by an enigmatic figure called the Sorcerer King.

On top of that I placed a foam core sheet I purchased from Staples for \$5.99. I used a marker to place dots on the sheet to create a 1" grid. Next, I used a hobby knife to cut a jagged hole. I painted the leftover pieces with Games Workshop's Codex Gray, Space Wolves Gray and Fortress Gray. After, I affixed them to the foam core with glue. The pieces looked like rubble surrounding a hole that lead down into the dungeon below.

Months ago I created a set of ruined buildings (Iridia 2) for a terrain project. I put the ruins to good use by placing them around the foam core. Because the ruined buildings had ledges, I could place miniatures in the second stories of the ruins. All together, the three levels created an intriguing environment. Each level could be set on the table and removed quickly to facilitate play. Huzzah! Color photos can be seen at IridiaZine.net/quest.htm.

Until next time, Christian

Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

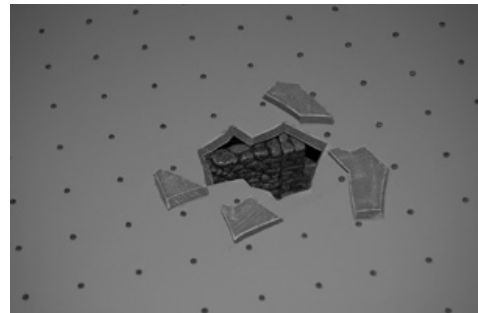
"I may not be a great warrior, but that doesn't mean I lack skills."

Huri Keyfate

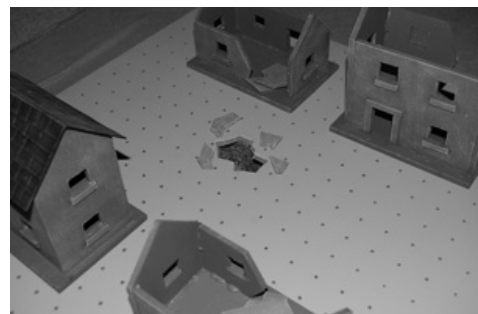
Every member of Huri's clan is expected to possess both technical and martial skills. Because he is smaller than the average dwarf, Huri fulfilled his military obligation by training as a tunnel scout. He learned to move silently through the caves around his home and to



Hallways and chambers lay beneath the ruined hamlet.



A hole in the street reveals a dungeon hallway below!



A view of the ruined buildings and street.

make sneak attacks from a hidden location. When not training, Huri worked as an apprentice locksmith. Huri excelled at opening locked doors and chests for owners who had lost their keys.

In order to improve upon his craft, Huri left the dwarven halls to learn about locks and traps built by other races. Adventuring suits Huri because it allows him to test his skills under stressful, dangerous conditions. He also doesn't mind the gems and gold that come along with the risk.

People who meet Huri find him to be kind and decent. Even though Huri is a Rogue, he's not a thief. Huri will never steal and prides himself on his honest and generous nature. In combat Huri will use his crossbow to strike from a distance. He will then close to melee and look for flank attacks with his short sword.

"Kneel before Hextor's might or face judgment!"

Initiate Justin Cowell

Initiate Justin Cowell is a fanatical follower of Hextor and displays the usual personality traits that one might expect. Justin is aggressive, arrogant, driven to stamp out any form of chaos, loathes elves, brutalizes the weak and demands obedience from all. Sadly for Justin, he's a newly ordained priest and therefore lacks the power to back up his doctrine. Justin is well-aware of this, so he often compensates by raising his voice and gesturing with his flail when confronting adversaries.

In combat Justin will cast *Doom* and *Cause Fear* against enemy fighters. He will then close to melee with spellcasters. Elves are also a favored opponent. He will fight to the death, as any priest of Hextor would.

Huri Keyfate, male dwarf Rog3; Medium humanoid (4' 1", 130 lbs); CR 3; HD 3d6+6; hp 15; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AL NG;

Armor: AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 12.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +3;

Melee: Shortsword +3 (+2 BAB, +1 str) (d6+1, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Light crossbow +4 (+2 BAB, +2 dex) (d8, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 15 (+2), Int 15 (+2), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Giant, Goblin.

Special Abilities: Darkvision, dwarven traits, Evasion, Sneak attack +2d6, Trapfinding, Trap Sense.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +8, Bluff +6, Decipher Script +7, Disable Device +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +12, Search +11, Spot +7, Use Magic Device +4; Skill Focus (open lock), Skill Focus (search).

Possessions: Shortsword, light crossbow, 12 bolts, backpack, iron rations, wineskin, thieves tools, blanket, antitoxin, Goggles of Minute Seeing, 3 x 20 gp gems, 30 gp.

Initiate Justin Cowell, male human Clr2; Medium humanoid (5' 9", 165 lbs); CR 2; HD 2d8+2; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AL LE;

Armor: AC 17 (+7 half-plate), touch 10, flat-footed 17.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +3;

Melee: Flail +4 (+1 BAB, +2 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+2, /x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +8.

Abilities: Str 14 (+2), Dex 12 (+1), Con 13 (+1), Int 14 (+2), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 15 (+2).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Goblin.

Special Abilities: Smite 1/day (+4 to hit, +2 to damage), Turn or rebuke undead.

Skills and Feats: Concentrate +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perform (oratory) +5, Ride +3; Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (flail), Weapon Focus (flail).

Cleric Domains: Destruction and War.

Spells (4/3+1; save DC 13 + spell level; domain spell marked with *): 0-*Create Water, Cure Minor Wounds, Light, Mend*; 1-*Cause Fear, Doom, Inflict Light Wounds**, *Protection from Chaos*.

Possessions: Flail, half-plate armor, backpack, iron rations, prayer book, holy symbol, 15 gp.



Iridia

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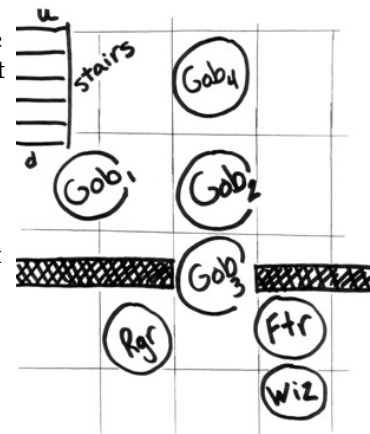
On Point

We finished the fourth of twelve sessions in our D&D 3.5 campaign. The players in my group have been employing some great tactics. Whenever possible they will set ambushes or flee from combat. The idea behind running is to withdraw to a position that gives them a tactical advantage. Their keen battle sense is really conducive to regular play. If two of my five players can't make a session, the game can still go on because the players who do show up employ effective tactics and can handle the beasties in the scenario.

I decided to go back to the Soutane font. Verdana was certainly easier to read, but it didn't feel right to me. I guess I liked the older look better. As always, I'm still tinkering with ways to improve the rag. I'm kicking around some changes to the print version of Iridia, changes that include a second attempt at a digest format and some additional content when possible. I just want to make the print copies a little more special, I guess. As always, I'll keep you posted.

This week I have two more NPCs from my campaign to share. Claire Larchwood and Mog Half-Ogre were wallflowers in my campaign, your typical flavor NPCs who help the heroes by sharing rumors and information. I got to thinking that perhaps Mog and Claire would get bored of helping others and might realize that they could be just as successful as the PCs. Forget sitting back and watching others get rich, they are going to head out and claim some treasure of their own. Doing so has disrupted the setting and by going "on strike" as extras, they have created some messes that the PCs will have to clean up.

Until next time, Christian



The PCs' favored tactic is to force foes into a battle that leaves them (the foes) open to flanking and AOOs.

Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

"Forget service to others. I'm going to serve myself."
Claire Larchwood

"Yeah. What she say!"
Mog Half-Ogre

Claire Larchwood has long been a humble servant of those in need. She has grown weary of this, however, feeling that she has been taken advantage of for far too long. Trained as a wizard, Claire possesses abilities that would certainly allow her to make a decent living for herself. Having arrived at this new sense of purpose, Claire has turned her back entirely on the weak and helpless.

Aiding her in this new venture of greed is a towering half-ogre named Mog. For years Mog helped Claire maintain the peace in a small hamlet named Bourne. An outcast because of his lineage, Mog enjoyed the patience and kindness the citizens of Bourne showed him. Like Claire he also grew tired of saving farmers from monsters and decided that a more lucrative lifestyle was for him. The longer he is away from Bourne, the more Mog thinks that the villagers put up with him simply because he was good at bashing things.

Claire and Mog can be found in the employ of just about anyone, provided the employer can pay. Claire and Mog are reluctant to harm innocents, but a pile of gold coins can go a long way to assuaging one's guilt.

Mog and Claire rationalize that they just need to sell their skills (and compromise their ethics) long enough to earn enough coin to retire in style.

Claire will prepare for battle by casting *Mage Armor*, *Shield* and *Protection from Arrows* upon herself. She will then cast *Haste* and *Bull's Strength* upon Mog. Once the battle is joined, Claire will direct a *Lightning Bolt* and *Magic Missiles* at a target until it is killed or flees.

A buffed Mog will charge into melee and hack at a separate foe until it drops. He uses his 10' reach to his best advantage. He will not stand adjacent to a foe, thereby forcing a Medium opponent into an AOO as it tries to move closer for an attack. Mog will react to this by taking a 5' step back on his turn and starting the whole process again. If under the effect of a *Haste*, Mog can still attack twice during a full round action after the 5' step.

If the opposition has not been defeated in three rounds, Claire will cast *Invisibility* and then run away. Mog will cover her retreat for an additional round before fleeing himself. To increase the lethality of Mog and Claire's attacks, have them attack the same foe. Mog and Claire are an EL 7 encounter.

Mog Half-Ogre, male half-ogre Ftr3; Large giant (7' 3", 324 lbs); CR 5; HD 3d10+12; hp 32; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 14 (+5 breastplate, -1 size), touch 10, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +12;

Melee: Greatsword +9 (+3 BAB, +5 str, -1 size, +1 weapon focus, +1 mw greatsword) (d10+5, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1.

Abilities: Str 20 (+5), Dex 10, Con 16 (+3), Int 6 (-2), Wis 10, Cha 8 (-1).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Special Abilities: Low-Light Vision, Darkvision.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7 (+4 in armor), Jump +6 (+3 in armor), Swim +6 (+3 in armor); Cleave, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus.

Possessions: Masterwork greatsword, breastplate, 10 gp.

With Bull's Strength, Mog will gain an additional +2 to hit and damage.

To build Mog I used the racial traits from Savage Species.

Claire Larchwood, female human Wiz5; Medium humanoid (5' 6", 120 lbs); CR 5; HD 5d4; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +2;

Melee: Dagger +2 (+2 BAB) (d4, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6.

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 16 (+3), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 12 (+1).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Sylvan, Giant.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +11, Craft (alchemy) +11, Gather Information +1, Hide +1, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Listen +3, Move Silently +1, Search +3, Spellcraft +14, Spot +3; Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (knowledge - arcana), Skill Focus (knowledge - spellcraft).

Spells (4/4/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level): 0-*Detect Magic, Disrupt Undead* x2, *Mend*; 1-*Mage Armor, Magic Missile* x2, *Shield*; 2-*Bull's Strength, Invisibility, Protection from Arrows*; 3-*Haste, Lightning Bolt*.

Possessions: Ring of Feather Falling, *Darkvision* scroll, potion of *Cure Light Wounds*, spellbook with all memorized spells including *Read Magic* and *Identify*, dagger, 30 gp.



Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

It's been a rare week, so you'll have to forgive me if this issue is a little out of the ordinary. I had some great ideas for this week's installment, but things got a little sideways. Oh well.

I've been reading on RPG.net and EN World that many gamers have received their 4e books early, especially those who ordered through Buy.com. As for me, I'll wait until the release date then head down to Aero Hobbies on Santa Monica Blvd. to pick up my PHB. While I could save money if I bought online, I enjoy the ritual of purchasing a new game in person. Support your FLGS and all that.

This week I've got three things to share with you. I'll talk about one of my favorite Villains and Vigilantes supplements, I offer a review of Dwarven Forge's Narrow Passage set and there's even a Map of Mystery on the back.

Until next time, Christian

On My Bookshelf

reviews of things you need

In high school my friends and I ran Villains and Vigilantes as our superhero rpg of choice. V&V, published by Fantasy Games Unlimited, is a great system. It's still in print and available at fantasygamesunlimited.net. My favorite V&V supplement is Super-Crooks & Criminals written by Ken Cliffe and illustrated by Patrick Zircher. Like any good support product, Super-Crooks & Criminals provides insight as to how a game of V&V should look and feel.

Super-Crooks & Criminals presents over 20 adversaries for the superheroes in your campaign. Surveying the NPC descriptions, there are super-villains powered by gadgets, inherent abilities, magical aptitude and alien origin. There's a little bit of everything, but it's all well-balanced. This lets the GM know that it's okay to mix things up a little. Each villain has a detailed stat block, illustration and background. Some of the NPCs are wicked individuals, not deserving of mercy. Others are sympathetic, perhaps providing an opportunity for heroes to rehabilitate their enemy. Speaking of heroes, there are a few good-aligned supers in the supplement, in addition to a great sidekick named Wonderboy. (Cue Tenacious D!)

Each villain comes with a 1" x 1" color cardstock counter for use in play. This is an excellent feature of the supplement and is standard for all V&V products. Best of all is the price. Super-Crooks & Criminals only costs \$6 + S/H. Bargain! The only downside to the product is the rather poor editing. There are typos and grammatical errors on nearly every page. (Not unlike Iridia.)

If you're in the market for an affordable, fun to read collection of super-villains, I highly recommend Super-Crooks & Criminals.

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

In Iridia 66 I reviewed the Room and Passage set from Dwarven Forge. Recently I added to my collection by purchasing the Narrow Passage kit. Retailing for \$99 + S/H, the Narrow Passage set allows the GM to create 5' wide hallways, alcoves and pillared rooms. One feature I really like are the four narrow doors that simulate



the cramped doorways that one might expect to find in a dungeon. No more squeezing two heroes side by side through a door! (The doorways in the Room and Passage set are rather wide.)

I've made my purchases online at dwarvenforge.com. Each time the shipping was very fast and the boxes arrived in good condition. The staff replies to e-mail in a prompt manner and I'm sure that I'll be adding to my collection throughout the summer!

Maps of Mystery

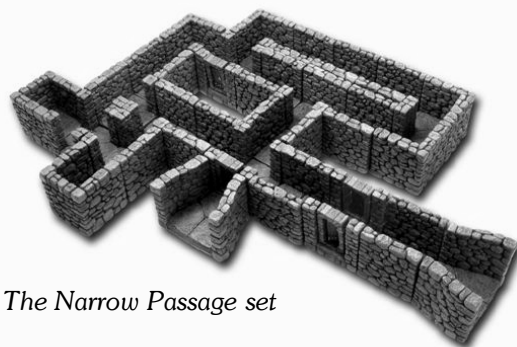
d&d 3.5

The Far Wanderer was found beached on a sandbar not far from the village of Bourne. From shore, no survivors could be seen. A few fishermen rowed out to inspect the wreck, but they never returned. Their boat eventually washed up on shore and it was splashed with blood. Since that grisly event, no one has dared to explore the ship.

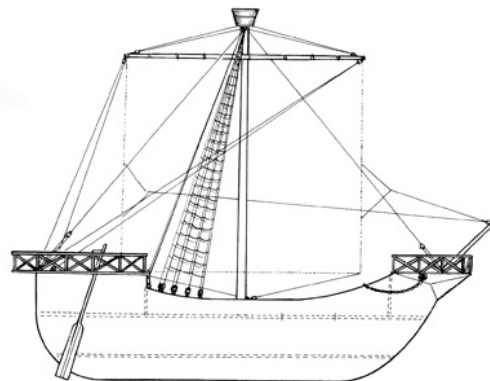
Lurking "near" the Far Wanderer are a trio of Ethereal Marauders. They attacked the Far Wanderer as it neared Bourne, causing the vessel to beach itself. Noting that additional prey is nearby, they are monitoring the wreck from the Ethereal, hoping that more rescuers might appear.

Hiding below decks is a young boson's mate named Avery. Avery has survived by covering himself with some fishing nets that have numerous lead weights on them. The lead has clouded the Ethereal Marauders' scrying into the Prime Material, allowing Avery to avoid the gruesome fate of his shipmates. Avery's getting hungry, though, and it's only a matter of time before he will need to break from cover. When he does, the Ethereal Marauders will pounce!

This map comes from one of my favorite issues of *Dragon*, number 75. Get a copy of it on EBay if you can. Good reading from cover to cover.



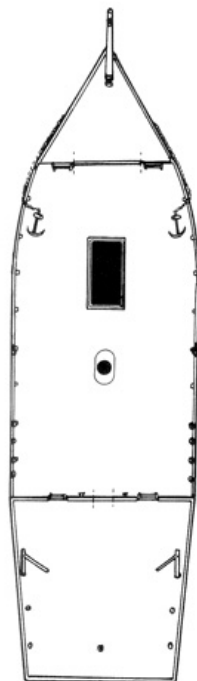
The Narrow Passage set



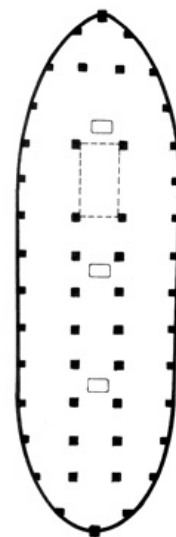
The Far Wanderer



Cabin Interiors



Main Deck



Cargo Hold



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

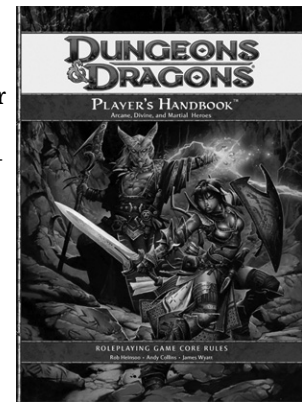
I finally had a chance to sit down with the 4e PHB. I've been keeping up with the daily previews at Wizards.com, so I felt like I already had a good idea of what to expect. Sadly, I feel like the new version of the game is only going to amplify some of the problems I have with 3.5.

When I run 3.5 the PHB rarely leaves my hands. I'm constantly flipping through the book, double-checking rules for Tumbling, Grappling, spell effects and other things. If my nose isn't in the book, then I'm trying to explain AOOs, facing, cover or line of sight. I accept that page-flipping is an inherent part of 3x. The fact that D&D has suffered from rules bloat is undeniable. The problem with 4e – for me at least – is that it's going to be complicated from early levels onward.

In 3.5 *Haste*, *Bull's Strength* and other buffs could add to the complication of a fight. However, those added details appeared gradually. In 4e beginning characters will have an array of daily, encounter and at-will abilities to employ in the first session. Monsters are now handled very differently, in addition to spells (rituals), alignment and so many other little details. It's as if 4e is an all new game and not a progression of 3.5.

I wish 4e was a more streamlined, simplified version of 3x, but it's not. Instead, 4e is going to require a steep learning curve and many more sessions with the rulebooks glued to my hands. For these reasons, I'm going to pass on 4e. I'm sure it's a wonderful game and I am happy that so many gamers will be enjoying it. I also respect the hard work that went into its production. I just need to go in a different direction.

Until next time, Christian



Pacific City

villains and vigilantes

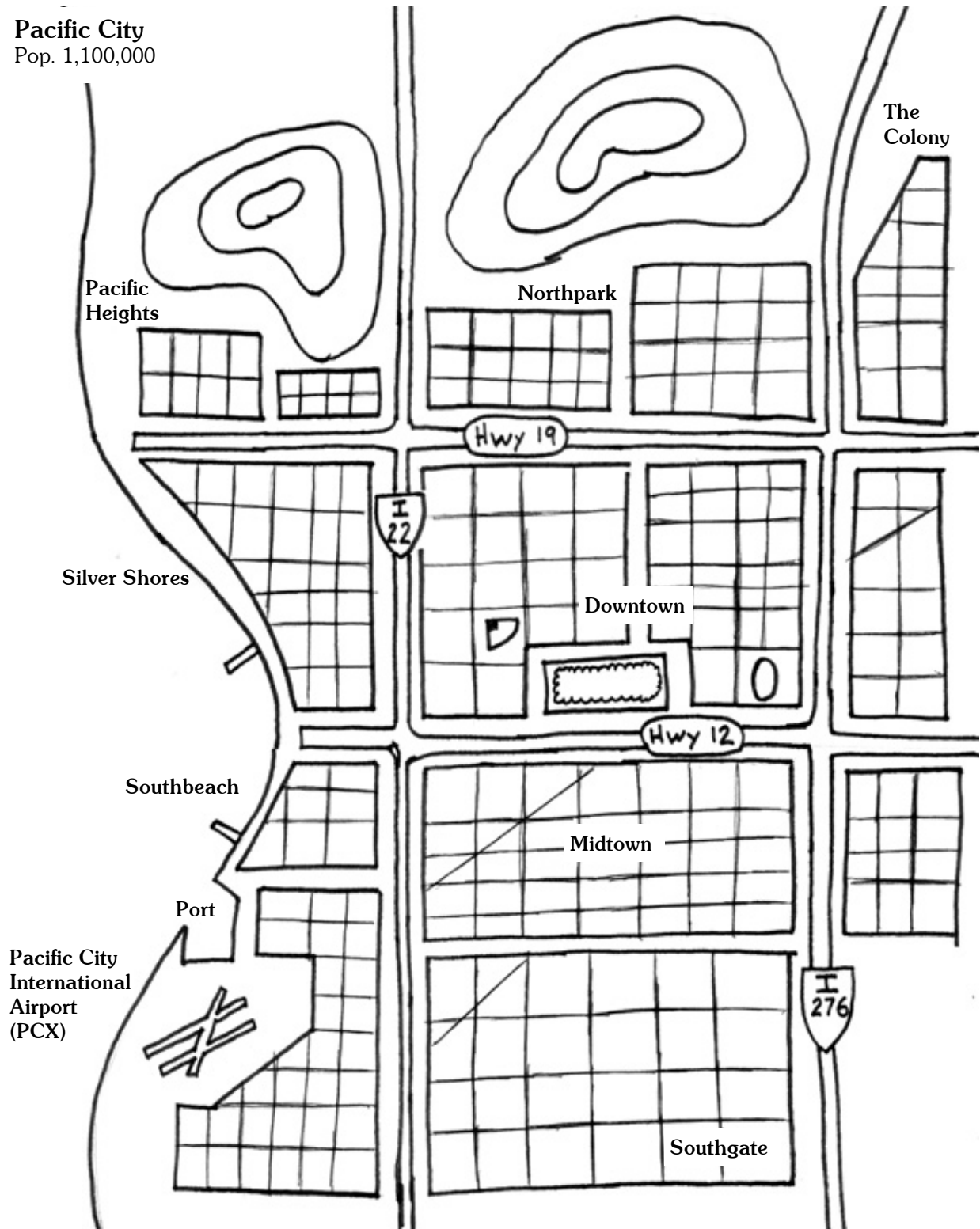
After reading and reviewing *Super-Crooks and Criminals for Villains and Vigilantes* (see Iridia 70), I got all fired up to put some notes together for a game. Will this campaign ever see the light of day? Eh, probably not, but a GM can tinker!

For my Villains and Vigilantes campaign, I'd use a fictional city. An imaginary metropolis would allow me to create locations, politics and geography that could be easily accepted by gamers, without having to rationalize the changes to a real-life city. "Come on, GM, everyone knows you can't land a 747 at Santa Monica Muni Airport." Or some other minutiae that would make a GM mental. Besides, comic books have a long, rich history of fictional urban centers, such as Gotham and Metropolis.

For a name, I've decided upon Pacific City. Located a few hours north of Los Angeles, Pacific City is a modern, cosmopolitan place with plenty of intrigue and, of course, a dark and seedy underbelly. Below is a rough map of Pacific City and its significant districts.

With a population of 1,100,000 residents, Pacific City is similar to Dallas, San Diego or Philadelphia in size. Pacific City possesses many resources that any large city might, including a port, international airport, professional sports teams, distinct neighborhoods and a university. Future issues of Iridia will offer more details about Pacific City. In the meantime, please enjoy the map on the next page.

Pacific City
Pop. 1,100,000



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

When I DM I tend to use humans and demi-humans as "monsters." I guess it's a habit I picked up years ago. The party will certainly battle the occasional humanoid and slobbering *thing*, but I prefer races from the PHB as the party's main adversaries. One thing I like about this style of play is the alignment dilemma that occasionally arises.

In a recent session the PCs in my campaign came into conflict with a group of neutral NPCs. The two groups were at odds and were competing to achieve the same objective. Over the course of the session, the tension between the groups escalated until the final, terrible words were spoken.

"I think we need to kill them."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, we have to kill them. We don't have many options left."

"Okay, but only if we all agree."

"Of course. Let's do it."

It was fascinating to watch the morality play develop. Orcs are easy. They are warty and mean. Of course they exist to be stabbed. Working up the nerve to kill a pretty human Wizard is an entirely different matter. Although I may not agree that the rival party needed to be slaughtered, I really like the way the PCs grappled with the decision. It was an example of mature players really trying to see the campaign setting through their characters' eyes. Good times.

Until next time, Christian



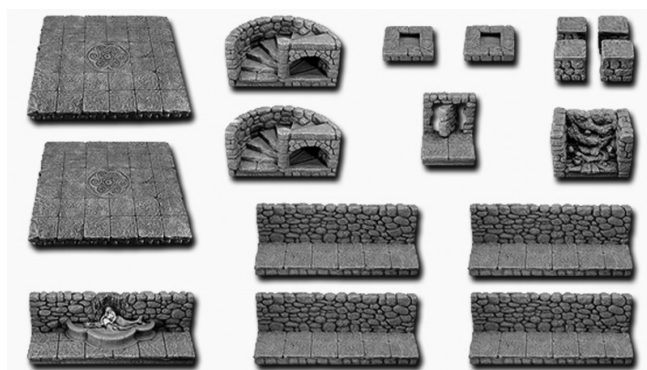
The party hovers near a trapdoor, which leads down to a cellar where the rival adventurers are hiding.

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

I am steadily building up my collection of Dwarven Forge dungeon tiles. The latest set in use at my game table is Wicked Additions 2, which retails for \$89 + S/H. Wicked Additions features 17 useful pieces, including two 6" x 6" floor tiles, two spiral staircases, a secret door, four small pillars and other unique building elements.

The 6" x 6" floor tiles are my favorite elements of the set. They allow the DM to create a large space for things like dwarven halls or dragon lairs. The spiral staircases, which I also like a great deal, will challenge me to create multi-level dungeons. Wicked Additions 2 is such a great set that I will definitely pick up the first one!



Rogues Gallery

d&d 3.5

"Even dreams must fall to order."

Sister Aven Mallory

Disgusted by the failure of her subordinates, Sister Aven is determined to advance the goals of Hextor's church. Aven realizes that her superiors will not tolerate any more bad news, so she is determined to succeed at any cost. To this end Aven has recruited four competent men at arms and an ogre name Grash.

Grash will lead the way in combat, acting like a blocker to soak up any AOOs as he plows into the enemy line. Behind Grash are the four men at arms - two to his left and two to his right. Between the two lines and directly behind Grash is Aven. Grash will melee with the largest enemy fighter, while the men at arms fight in pairs. Aven will seek out and engage enemy spellcasters.

Before combat, Aven will cast *Bull's Strength* on Grash and *Protection from Good* upon herself. When possible she will try to *Shatter* the weapon of an enemy warrior, in addition to casting *Cure Light Wounds* when necessary. Aven also likes to cast *Hold Person* on a foe so that she can bash his brains in with her flail.

The stat blocks for Sister Aven and the men at arms can be found below. In my own campaign, Aven and her group are trying to avenge the death of Initiate Justin Cowell. (See Iridia 68)

Sister Aven Mallory, female human Clr3; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 140 lbs); CR 3; HD 3d8+3; hp 15; Init +6; Spd 20 ft; AL LE;

Armor: AC 18 (+6 chainmail +1, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 16.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +2;

Melee: Flail +3 (+2 BAB, +1 weapon focus) (d8+2, /x2).

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +7.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 14 (+2), Con 12 (+1), Int 14 (+2), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 16 (+3).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Goblin.

Special Abilities: Smite 1/day (+4 to hit, +3 to damage), Turn or rebuke undead.

Skills and Feats: Concentrate +6, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +4, Perform (oratory) +4; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon Proficiency (flail), Weapon Focus (flail).

Cleric Domains: Destruction and War.

Spells (4/3+1/2+1; save DC 12 + spell level; domain spell marked with *): 0-*Detect Poison*, *Light*, *Purify Food & Drink*, *Read Magic*; 1-*Cure Light Wounds*, *Inflict Light Wounds**, *Protection from Good*, *Summon Monster 1*; 2-*Hold Person*, *Bull's Strength*, *Shatter**.

Possessions: Chainmail +1, flail, prayer book, holy symbol, 20 gp.

Man-at-Arms, male human War2; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 170 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +4; Spd 20 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 17 (+5 chainmail, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +3;

Melee: Longsword +5 (+2 BAB, +2 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+2, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Light crossbow +2 (+2 BAB) (d8, 19-20/x2).

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0.

Abilities: Str 14 (+2), Dex 11, Con 14 (+2), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +2, Listen +2, Spot +2; Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Chainmail, heavy steel shield, light crossbow, 12 bolts, longsword, waterskin, 5 gp.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Summer is here and I'm so happy. Time for a nice long break. Nothing to do except surf, work on some new short film projects, watch baseball and game!

I'm writing this issue (the rough draft at least) and recording the podcast on my new MacBook. I haven't used a Mac in about 10 years, so it feels a little awkward. I'm hoping that the creative vibe and edginess of the Mac rubs off on this issue. ;) Seriously though, I hope that using Garage Band to record the podcast eliminates some problems I've had with Audacity.

My D&D 3.5 mini-campaign will be wrapping up on July 6th. The eight sessions we played allowed us to achieve the intended goal: Get used to gaming with new people and learn one another's style. I'll be handing off the reins to another DM for a bit, but I'm already thinking about my next game.

I really want to run a campaign using Labyrinth Lord, which is a well-written, easy to play D&D retro clone. Check it out at goblinoidgames.com. Since LL is on my mind I'd like to present a gold dragon NPC that will feature prominently in the eventual campaign.

Finally, I created a new Skype account that I use when I'm on my Mac, which is quite often these days. You can Skype me using my e-mail address (HelloChristian@mac.com). Or, you can hit me up via MS Messenger using the same address.

Until next time, Christian

Aurumvorax

labyrinth lord

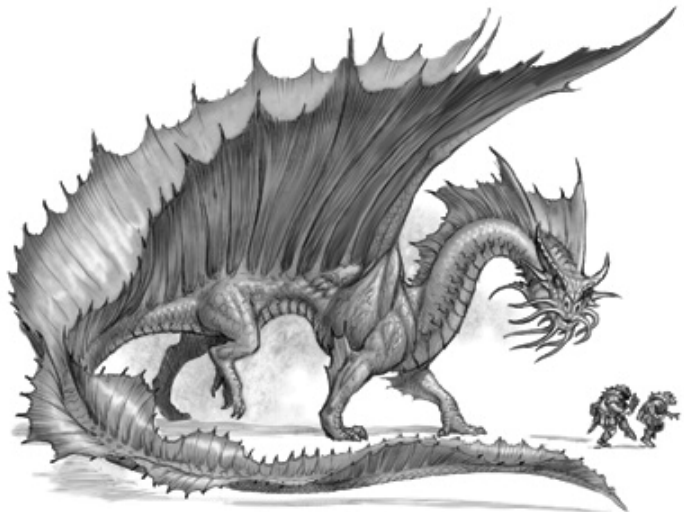
"I've watched over this city for far too long to let anything bad happen to it."

Aurumvorax the Gold

Aurumvorax is a mature gold dragon and the ruler of the Freecity of Haldane. When Aurumvorax was a hatchling, the city was nothing more than a few tents inhabited by nomads. As the settlement grew, so did the dragon's interest. He was - and remains - fascinated by the lives of humans and demi-humans. Their romances, humor, triumphs and tragedies never cease to amaze him.

Thanks to his shape-changing ability, Aurumvorax was able to interact with the people who built the city. As he watched Haldane grow from camp to village to town to freecity, he began to feel a certain fondness for the place. After all, he had personally known generations of Haldane's inhabitants.

Methodically, Aurumvorax ingrained himself into a position of power and influence by posing as a human merchant. He gradually revealed his true identity until Haldane's citizens were quite taken with the idea of a draconic mayor. As a result, Aurumvorax has



enjoyed managing Haldane for nearly a century.

Aurumvorax governs the city with the assistance of capable ministers and officials. He prefers that the city runs smoothly and efficiently, but Aurumvorax understands that demi-humans and humans are fallible. He also employs a group of stout dwarf warriors as his personal bodyguard. The dwarfs, recruited from a distant mountain forge, are loyal and nearly impossible to bribe.

Because Aurumvorax is a magical creature, he prizes arcane pursuits. Under his tutelage, Haldane has earned a reputation as a center for magical research. The hall where Aurumvorax holds court is always teeming with alchemists, aspiring magic-users, explorers and anyone interested in the arcane.

Aurumvorax is always looking for adventuring groups to retrieve rare ingredients for a potion, a lost book of spells or to perform some task vital to the welfare of Haldane. He pays well, but is rather demanding. While Aurumvorax allows for missteps among the citizens of the Freecity, he is rather impatient with ineptitude as it pertains to outsiders.

Like all dragons, Aurumvorax lusts for gold and treasure. His horde is impressive and some citizens resent his wealth. They wonder how much of their taxes go toward the maintenance of the Freecity and how much of it is used for Aurumvorax's bedding.

In his human form Aurumvorax appears as a striking, tall man in his 30s with shoulder-length blond hair, amber eyes and a gold hue to his skin.

Aurumvorax (male gold dragon); AL: Lawful; MV: 90' (30'), Fly 240' (80'); AC: -2; HD: 11; HP: 66; Atk: 3 or 1 (2 claws, 1 bite or breath); Dmg: 2d4/2d4/6d6; Spells: 1-Charm Person, Light, Magic Missile, Protection from Evil, Sleep; 2-Detect Evil, Detect Invisible, Detect Magic, ESP, Web; 3-Clairvoyance, Hold Person, Lightning Bolt x 2; SV: F11; ML: 10; XP: 4,400 (1,200 base + 800 x 4 for the following special abilities: flight, shape change, spells and breath weapon).

Aurumvorax has two breath weapons available to him. (He still only gets three breath attacks per day.) He can breathe a 90' long, 30' wide cone of fire or a 50' long, 40' wide cloud of chlorine gas.

His treasure horde consists of 4,000 cp, 20,000 sp, 15,000 ep, 20,000 gp, 20 x 100 gp gems, 20 x 200 gp jewelry, Potion of Undead Control, Ring of Water Walking, Sword +2 and Shield +2.



To represent Aurumvorax on the game table, there are two options: a \$10 large miniature from the Night Below D&D minis collection or a \$60 huge figure from the Giants of Legend series.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Several new boxes of Dwarven Forge products arrived at my doorstep last week. What a great gift! I'm really looking forward to putting them to good use. When time permits, I'll post a review of each set. For now let me say that I'm very impressed with the Medieval Building sets. They are cast from a product called Polystone, which gives them a nice weight and durability. The quality of the paint and attention to detail are also amazing.

This week I wanted to continue with more Labyrinth Lord material. In Iridia 73 I introduced Aurumvorax the Gold, the draconic ruler of the Freecity of Haldane. Since Haldane will be the starting point for my eventual LL campaign, I'd like to share a map of the city. It's a bit rough, but I hope to add more detail in future issues.

Until next time, Christian

The Freecity of Haldane

labyrinth lord

"We pride ourselves on our tolerance. After all, the mayor breathes fire. And poison gas."

Stefan Cole, merchant

The Freecity of Haldane is found on the Plain of Cenchreai (ken-kree-eye). (Stones from the ruins of ancient Cenchreai still get caught in farmers' plows.) Haldane straddles the Vale River, which flows into the Straits of Antissa, a few miles to the west. To the north of the city is a fertile grassland, where much of the area's meat, dairy and other foodstuffs are produced. To the east lay mountains, with the peaks of Watchtower and Eclipse visible from the city. To the south is a marshland. Roads connect Haldane to the nearby settlements of Thresh and Silent Vale.

Haldane is ruled by the gold dragon Aurumvorax (see Iridia 73), who delegates responsibilities to officials and administrators. Although the dragon's office is an elected position, he has run unopposed for 75 years. The city is a haven for craftsmen, artisans, scholars and anyone looking for a relatively clean and safe city to live in. This isn't to say that Haldane does not have problems. Morlocks - degenerate, subterranean humanoids - lurk in the city's sewers, while ogres wander the plains to the north. Large wolves come down from the mountains to pick off lone travelers and trolls stalk the marsh to the south.

The city enjoys a diverse population. Elves from Far Isle, which is found in the Straits of Antissa, maintain an exclusive, well-landscaped city block. Dwarves from a forge deep within Watchtower (a high mountain peak to the east) work as masons and blacksmiths. Halflings from the plains are a common sight as well. Their carts full of fresh produce are a welcome addition to the city market. The occasional centaur and gnome can also be seen in the streets.

On the back page is a rough map of the city. More information will be included in future issues of Iridia. In the meantime, a few important areas of Haldane are briefly described below.

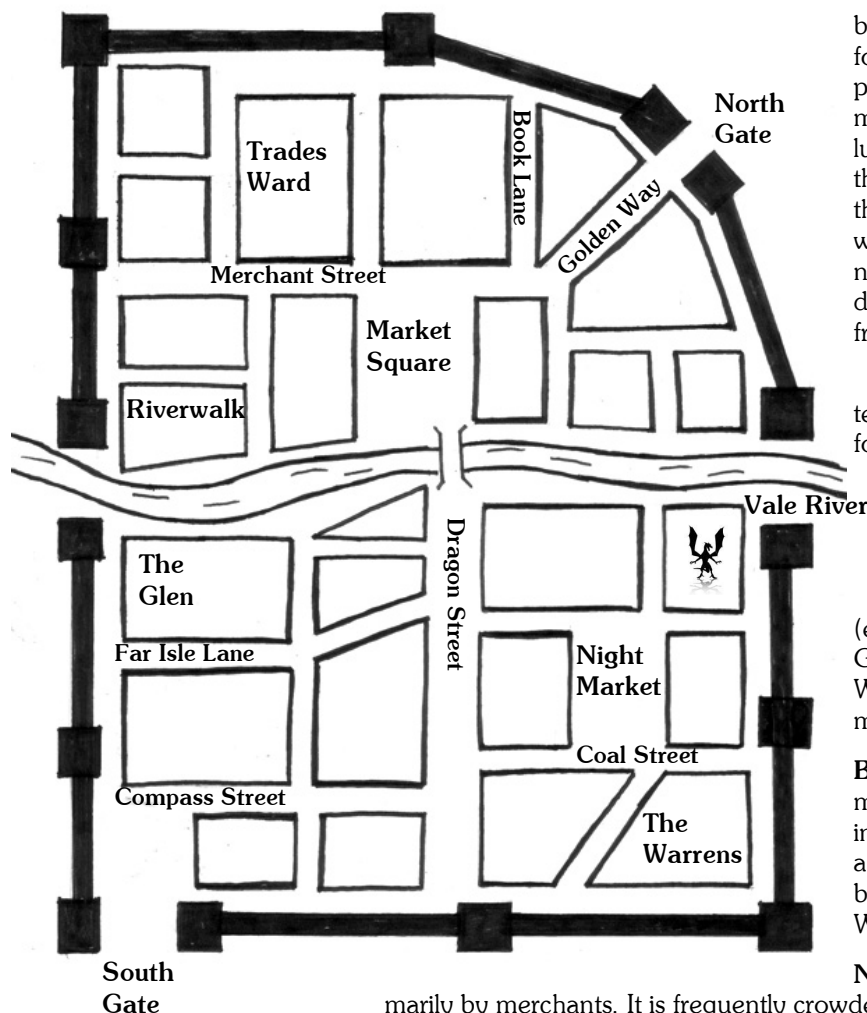
Trades Ward: This borough is home to the city's craftsmen and their workshops. Its close proximity to the market square facilitates the easy sale of goods. Aurumvorax believes in fair and open competition, so there are no trade guilds that might stifle ambition or fix prices.

Market Square: Haldane's market square is as you'd expect. It's full of stalls, merchants, shoppers and a bewildering variety of goods and services. City guards keep an eye peeled for pickpockets at all times.

Riverwalk: This exclusive neighborhood is home to the city's most wealthy individuals. Their homes are well-guarded and often protected by a gate or low wall. Private guards patrol the streets and frequently challenge passer-bys to declare their names and business in the area.

The Glen: Elves who live in or visit Haldane stay in this area. The streets are immaculate, the buildings tastefully painted and gardens abound. Because the elves prefer their privacy, gates restrict access to everyone, except city officials or those who have business with the elves.

The Night Market: This square is used as a gathering place for friends, lovers and those wishing to browse the stalls of merchants selling goods that might raise a few eyebrows during the day. The block to the northeast of the Night Market is home to Aurumvorax. (look for the dragon icon) He lives in a beautifully designed, sprawling mansion that features private gardens, an excellent library, servants' quarters and alert security.



The Warrens: These few blocks are home to Haldane's less-fortunate citizens. The unemployed, elderly widows, single-mothers and those down on their luck all make their way the best that they can. Aurumvorax ensures that free bread, soup and clean water are distributed to anyone in need. Not only is this a kind and decent act, but it keeps the rabble from trying to pilfer his horde!

Compass Street: Haldane's temples and churches can be found along this street. Followers of chaotic gods are not permitted to assemble, but that doesn't mean they are without their secret gathering places.

The churches of Elyswen (ellis-wen), Shavin the Night Guardian, Risa the Bountiful and Weyoun the Wanderer are the most popular.

Book Lane: Haldane is home to many sages, alchemists and aspiring magic-users. Most live, work and study in the neighborhood between Book Lane and Golden Way.

North Gate: This gate is used primarily by merchants. It is frequently crowded and jammed with wagons, mules and carts. South Gate is a much more pedestrian-friendly option.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Okay, one last week in the Freecity of Haldane, then it's off to something new and different. I have a tendency to over-plan when I'm running a game. I'll develop all kinds of NPCs, locations and back-story that are not always used in actual play. To avoid that mistake again, I've just a few relevant details about Haldane to share.

The last session of my 3.5 mini-campaign is going to take place in a few days. I've decided to end things on a cliff-hanger in order to leave the door open for further adventures. I'm not sure if there'll ever be a follow-up game, but hey, why not?

On a final note, I'm very happy with my MacBook's Garage Band software. It has allowed me to export my podcasts in a good audio quality without a large file size. If you haven't, I encourage you to give the weekly podcasts a listen. As always, you can hit me up via e-mail at Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Haldane For The Adventurer

labyrinth lord

Any adventurer who visits Haldane might require basic services, such as a place to stay and a tavern to quench his thirst. In addition, adventurers may want to visit a temple to obtain healing or see a wizard to have a potion identified. Below are a few locations that might be used in play. The game master should feel free to develop each entry to suit his needs.

The Rookery

Found on Dragon Street, the Rookery is a well-known inn popular with merchants and other travelers. The inn is a sturdy, three storey building. Out front hangs a red sign with a golden eagle emblazoned upon it.

The owners are a charming couple in their 50's named Gibson and Jenna. Jenna takes care of the front of the house, while Gibson manages the kitchens and other domestic duties. Prices are modest and guests will find the rooms to be clean and tidy. To keep characters entertained, I suggest the random table from Iridia 25, which lists several inn encounters.

The Cask and Cleaver

Located on Coal Street, the Cask and Cleaver is a rustic tavern with a great deal of character. The tavern attracts caravan guards, a few members of the City Watch, scouts and other martial specialists. It's the kind of place where stories can be swapped and rumors of good-paying jobs can be shared.

Miles Noll is the ham-fisted owner of the Cask and Cleaver. He's a former scout who led many caravans safely from destination to destination until he finally decided to retire.

The Temple of Elyswen

The followers of Elyswen value peace, serenity, forgiveness and generosity. To that end, the clerics of the church care for the sick and needy. They also provide healing to wounded adventurers, then use the money for their charitable causes. Below is a list of spells that can be cast by the clerics at the



The Cask and Cleaver is an excellent place for a pint.

temple, which is located on Compass Street.

Cure Light Wounds: 50 gp
Cure Serious Wounds: 250 gp
Cure Critical Wounds: 500 gp
Cure Disease: 200 gp
Heal: 750 gp
Raise Dead: 2,000 gp
Regenerate: 750 gp

Gypsum Pembroke, Wizard for Hire

At some point in their career, every adventurer will require a magic-user to identify a potion, divine the activation word for a wand or to purchase/sell a scroll. For all of those needs and more, Gypsum Pembroke is an excellent choice. Her home is located on Book Lane, where many alchemists, sages, wizards and sooth-sayers live.

Gypsum is a 9th level magic-user and one of the most talented spellcasters in the city. Characters will rarely deal with Gypsum directly. Instead, PCs will negotiate with one of her apprentices or assistants. Gypsum's prices are average and she works quickly. The following services are offered:

Identify a Potion: 50 gp
Brew a Potion: 500 gp x level of the spell
Identify a Magic Item (and reveal activation word if applicable): 100 gp
Sell a Scroll: 500 gp x level of the spell

Please see page 125 of the LL role-playing game for more details on magical research.

Other Locations

Previous issues of Iridia have detailed a number of taverns, homes and businesses that might be useful for an urban campaign.

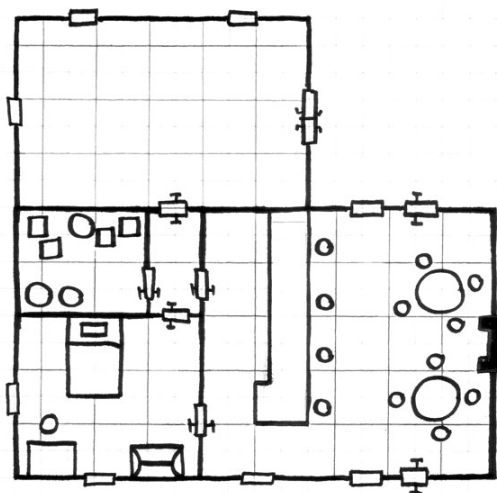
Private Residences: Three maps to homes of different sizes and layouts can be found in Iridia 29, 30 and 59.

Taverns: The Sleeping Sentry, which caters to members of the City Watch, can be found in Iridia 45. Sharby's Sow can be seen in Iridia 17 and the Quiet Thyme tavern is in Iridia 27.

Warehouse: PCs might require a safe, secure location to store their treasure and other loot. Samuel Keller's warehouse from Iridia 43 would do wonderfully.

City Watch HQ: Please see Iridia 47 for a map of a City Watch headquarters.

Alchemist: Gwen's Alchemy from Iridia 52 would serve as an example of a home/workshop.



*Sharby's Sow tavern from
Iridia 17*



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I've written many different kinds of zines. A few of them have generated quite a bit of mail, some of it from prisoners. I'm not sure how it happens, but it's common for zines to get passed along to those who are incarcerated. With few social outlets, prisoners can often generate some lengthy missives. While most all of the prison mail I've received has been a pleasure to read, there have been some notable exceptions. One fellow was convinced that I was a woman and that my wife and I spent our days frolicking at the beach in our bikinis and "role-playing." "You be the cheerleader this time and I'll be the naughty nurse." That sort of thing. Needless to say, the guy really wanted to learn more about rpgs...

Besides prison correspondence, I sometimes get some game-related snail mail that's really great. Last week Matt Borselli of the 1001 Nights and 1 Night zine sent me a copy of Savage Worlds! It looks like a rule-light, easy to run system that works well in any genre. I look forward to giving it a thorough read.

Last week I wrote that I was wrapping up my Freecity of Haldane articles, but I fibbed. I'm having a lot of fun with the project, so I think I'll stick with it. Enjoy your week and good gaming!

Until next time, Christian

Factions and Societies Part I

labyrinth lord

Like any city, the Freecity of Haldane has a number of political factions and organizations that influence daily life. Some have nothing but good intentions, while others are wicked. What follows is part one of a two-part series of articles detailing nine organizations, three each for the Lawful, Neutral and Chaotic alignments. Each organization will feature a sample NPC that the PCs may interact with.

Order of the Dragon

Alignment: Lawful

Allies: Society of the Magi

Enemies: The Thieves' Guild, Morlocks, Cult of Veoden, Council for a Free Haldane

Motivation: Lead by Grammel Ironmaul, the Order of the Dragon are 12 stout dwarves who act as Aurumvorax's personal bodyguard. The dragon also relies upon the dwarves to handle threats that are immediate and severe, such as a sighting of morlocks in the sewers. They are well-paid and loyal. It's an honor for them to serve the gold dragon, so they have a morale of 10.

Church of Elyswen

Alignment: Lawful

Allies: The Night Watch

Enemies: The Cult of Veoden

Motivation: Elyswen is a goddess of peace. She cares deeply for her worshippers and instructs her clerics to provide assistance to those in need.

Elyswen's temple is a busy place, with worshipers attending services, the sick looking for healing and the hungry asking for alms. Elyswen's followers are bitterly opposed to the Cult of Veoden and occasionally hire adventurers to drive away followers of the rival church.

Grammel Ironmaul, Dwarf 6;

Alignment: Lawful; *Abilities:* Str 16, Int 10, Wis 11, Dex 11, Con 16, Cha 11; *AC:* 2 (plate mail +1); *Hit Dice:* 6; *Hit Points:* 36; *Attacks:* War hammer +1 (+3 to hit & damage, 1d6+3); *Move:* 30'; *Languages:* Common, dwarven, goblin, gnome, kobold; *Special Abilities:* Infravision, 2 in 6 chance of detecting traps, false walls, hidden construction or sloped passages; *Equipment:* Plate mail +1, war hammer +1, 20 gp, 50 gp gem.

Loyal and steadfast, Grammel Ironmaul is Aurumvorax's powerful right hook in battle.

Elyswen had a sister named Leandra, who was slain by a powerful demon lord of the undead. Leandra is now revered as a saint and is prayed to by those who must battle the undead.

The Night Watch

Alignment: Lawful

Allies: Church of Elyswen

Enemies: The Thieves' Guild

Motivation: The Night Watch is a group of selfless individuals who worship a minor deity named Shavin the Night Watchman. Shavin walks beside lost and lonely travelers, providing company, solace and a helpful light to illuminate darkened roads. His followers believe that the path to salvation lays in following their deity's example. To that end, they shine lanterns into darkened alleys, alert the City Watch of burglaries and walk lone individuals home.

Fraternal Order of Rat Catchers

Alignment: Neutral

Allies: Church of Elyswen

Enemies: Morlocks, Thieves' Guild

Motivation: The men and women who rid Haldane of vermin are an uncelebrated lot. They toil in the city's sewers, alleys and basements, constantly keeping a tide of rats and pesky insects in check. The Rat Catchers care little for politics; they just want to get their jobs done and go home. They occasionally run afoul of morlocks and thieves while going about their duties, so they have a deep hatred of those two groups. Fortunately, the Church of Elyswen takes pity on the Rat Catchers and frequently heals their wounds and cures any diseases they contract for free. Because they have access to all of Haldane's nooks and crannies, they overhear quite a bit of juicy gossip, in addition to finding rather interesting items carelessly cast aside. The Rat Catchers are not above a bribe to share valuable rumors.

Brother Jacob of the Night

Watch, Cleric 1; Alignment: Lawful; Abilities: Str 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Cha 12; AC: 4 (chain mail, shield); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 6; Attacks: Mace (1d6); Move: 30'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to magic-based saving throws, turn undead; Spells: 1-Light; Equipment: Chain mail, mace, shield, lantern, flask of oil.

If he survives dark alleyways filled with rats and thieves, Brother Jacob hopes to shine like the sun into places dark and dangerous.

Marley Crane, Level 0 Hu-

man; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 10; AC: 8 (padded); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 4; Attacks: Club (1d4); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Equipment: Club, torch, rat traps, sack.

There are no heroes in the sewers, just hard workers who finish their shifts without getting bitten by a diseased rat, stabbed by a thief or eaten by morlocks.

Sister Jessica, Cleric 3; Alignment: Lawful; Abilities: Str 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Cha 13; AC: 5 (chain mail); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 12; Attacks: Mace (1d6); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to magic-based saving throws, -1 adjustment to reactions, turn undead; Spells: 1-Cure Light Wounds, Detect Evil; 2-Hold Person; Equipment: Chain mail, mace, potion of healing, 10 gp.

Sister Jessica is a selfless servant of Elyswen's church. She always puts the needs of the weak and helpless before her own.

To represent a few of the NPCs in play, I suggest the following D&D miniatures:



The Dwarf Maulfighter from the Desert of Desolation series is perfect for Grammel.



The High Inquisitor from the Unhallowed release makes a great Rat Catcher.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

The summer is rolling along nicely here in Los Angeles. I hope yours is lovely as well. At the time of writing I've not had the best of luck in trying to get a Labyrinth Lord game off the ground, but I remain optimistic. This week I have the second installment of the factions and societies of Haldane, which is the city where my LL game will get started. Should the recruitment not work out, I'll try to run the game with 1e AD&D rules. Heck, maybe I'll even go with GURPS 4e. Whatever it takes to get players, you know?

Until next time, Christian

Factions and Societies Part II

labyrinth lord

Below are five additional factions and societies to add to last week's article. A few stat blocks for NPCs belonging to the organizations are also provided.

Society of the Magi

Alignment: Neutral

Allies: Order of the Dragon

Enemies: Council for a Free Haldane

Motivation: The Society of the Magi is tight-knit, exclusive organization for magic-users and sages. The society cooperates to share lore, spells and magic items. Moreover, the Society of the Magi provides checks and balances on their membership. They ensure that wizards have the right to practice their craft, while at the same time making sure that no single magic-user becomes corrupted. The society is underwritten by Aurumvorax, who provides gold and political support. In exchange, he is able to call upon the society to aid him when the need arises. The Society of the Magi is wary of the Council for a Free Haldane.

Council for a Free Haldane

Alignment: Neutral

Allies: None

Enemies: Society of the Magi, Order of the Dragon

Motivation: Founded by a self-styled "Lord", the Council for a Free

Haldane was created by Damon Howell. Damon spent many years exploring the mountains, swamps and other wild spaces around Haldane. He earned a name for himself as a legendary swordsman when he and his fellow adventurers (collectively known as the Company of the Pegasus) slew a band of giants that had terrorized the Plain of Cenchreai. (The Freecity is found upon the Plains of Cenchreai. See Iridia 74)

After acquiring significant power and influence, Lord Damon wishes to build a stronghold. He would like to construct a keep adjoining the city walls, but Aurumvorax has blocked this. The dragon feels that Lord Damon wishes to assume control over the city and do away with free elections and many individual freedoms in favor of a dynastic (i.e. feudal) style government. To thwart Aurumvorax, Lord Damon is spending a considerable amount of money to influence Haldane's citizens and wealthy elite.

Because they are closely related to Aurumvorax, Lord Damon does not trust the Society of the Magi.

Apris the Wondrous, Magic

User 3; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 8, Int 14, Wis 10, Dex 10, Con 9, Cha 13; AC: 9 (robes); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 7; Attacks: Dagger (d4); Move: 40'; Languages: Common, elvish; Special Abilities: Magic-User spells; Spells: 1-Sleep, Charm Person; 2-Web; Dagger, spellbook, Potion of Flying, Magic Missile scroll (written at the 5th level), 20 gp.

After settling in Haldane, Apris found a stimulating, supportive family among the Society of the Magi.

Cult of Veoden

Alignment: Chaotic

Allies: None

Enemies: The Church of Elyswen, Order of the Dragon

Motivation: Veoden the Old, Veoden the Grey, the Withered One. All of these names are used to describe the dark deity of death and disease.

Veoden's followers are interested in two things: power and immortality.

Veoden has the power to grant both, provided his subjects serve him without question. Veoden's followers are asked to commit horrible acts, but the reward is great. Long life, wealth and power are granted to the favored worshipers, but disease and horrible afflictions are bestowed upon the unworthy. The latter followers are occasionally unleashed upon Haldane to wage campaigns of terror.

The Thieves' Guild

Alignment: Chaotic

Allies: None

Enemies: Everyone

Motivation: Because they ply their trade in a city with a draconic mayor, a wizard's society and have morlocks lurking in the sewers, Haldane's thieves' guild operates with extreme caution and secrecy. There are only 20 or so full-time thieves in the city. They engage in crimes such as pick-pocketing, burglary, extortion and the occasional robbery. The thieves choose their targets carefully and try to avoid a target that is well-connected. There are many rumors surrounding the guild leader's identity, but some whisper that he (it?) is a doppelganger!

The Morlocks

Alignment: Chaotic

Allies: None

Enemies: Everyone

Motivation: The morlocks are descendants of an ancient society that long ago succumbed to decadence and hubris. The ruins of their city state now lay below the plains surrounding Haldane. Forced to flee the sunlit world - they had so angered the gods

they were forced underground - the morlocks now live in caves, winding tunnels and in deep, forgotten chambers. Jealous of the city that has now risen above their ruins, the morlocks lash out in vengeful spasms of violence. Haldane's citizenry would like to see the morlocks eliminated entirely, but no one can decide who has the resources or skills to undertake such an expedition.

Caleb Stone, Cleric 3; Alignment: Chaotic; Abilities: Str 11, Int 12, Wis 14, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 9; AC: 6 (bracers of armor AC 6); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 10; Attacks: Mace (1d6); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to magic-based saving throws, turn undead; Spells: 1-Cause Light Wounds, Darkness; 2-Curse; Equipment: Bracers of Armor AC 6, mace, 35 gp.

Caleb craves power, wealth and pleasures of the flesh. He will destroy anyone who gets in the way of him acquiring these things.

Abel Artone, Fighter 3; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 15, Int 9, Wis 9, Dex 10, Con 16, Cha 8; AC: 3 (banded mail, shield); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 22; Attacks: Longsword +1 (+2 to hit and damage, 1d8+2); Move: 30'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to force doors, +1 adjustment to reactions; Equipment: Banded mail, shield, longsword +1, 15 gp.

Abel has a healthy respect for powerful non-humans and would much rather be governed by a man than a dragon.

Kylie, Thief 4; Alignment: Chaotic; Abilities: Str 9, Int 10, Wis 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Cha 15; AC: 5 (leather armor, +2 dex); Hit Dice: 4; Hit Points: 11; Attacks: Dagger (+2 to hit when thrown, 1d4); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: -1 to reactions, thief abilities, backstab; Equipment: Dagger, leather armor, 2 x 25 gp gems.

Kylie uses her charm and good looks to get close to potential targets.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Apologies for the long delay. I went away for a surf trip and was gone for a few weeks. It was nice to surf in warm water and uncrowded conditions. I'm glad to be back, though. L.A. is such a great city and I always enjoy coming home.

My attempts to get a Labyrinth Lord or AD&D 1e game off the ground failed. Everyone wants to play 4e or even D&D 3.5. Fortunately, I may be able to reconstitute my former group. While I need a break from D&D's latter editions, the prospect of not gaming is unappealing. D&D is what it is, so I'll make it work! It's like the quality of surf in Los Angeles. It's not great, but it's consistent and that's fine by me.

Having said all that, I will be sharing some GURPS material this week. I got to talking with an old friend and thought I'd present the three PCs that comprised the adventuring party in an old campaign. Bastion, Shrake and William had lots of crazy adventures that featured time travel, clones, aliens and dwarves with muskets. Eventually, every GURPS campaign gets a little weird...

Until next time, Christian

William, Shrake and Bastion

gurps 4e

"If you'd stop talking so much and look around, you might actually learn something."

William Aberdale

William is a quiet, reserved young man. Tight-lipped, he is reluctant to share many details of his personal life. William is lightly armed and armored, preferring speed and stealth. He is a careful observer and few details go unnoticed when he is around. William is fascinated by magic or anything supernatural. His curiosity has gotten him into some tight situations, but William's friends are always on hand to rescue him.

William has the uncanny ability to hide in plain sight. Because he is so quiet and unassuming, it's easy to overlook him, even if he is standing nearby. William finds that his ability is useful for eavesdropping and skulking about.

"I only kill things that piss me off."

Shrake

Shrake is a hot-tempered warrior with very little patience for the strange or unusual. Sadly for Shrake, the world he lives in is full of magical and mysterious creatures. This fact frustrates him to no end. All Shrake wants is to make a decent living for himself, yet he is constantly beset by crazed wizards, snarling beasts and all manner of odd-

William Aberdale (133 points)

SM 0 (5' 10" tall, 170 lbs.);
ST 10, DX 13 [60], IQ 11 [20], HT 11 [10];
HP 10, Will 11, Per 13 [10], FP 11;
Basic Lift 20, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d;
Basic Speed 6.0, Basic Move 6;
Dodge 9, Parry 8 (with knife), Block -;
DR 2 (leather armor).

Advantages and Perks

Obscure (vision) 5 (defensive, +50%; stealthy, +100%; reduced range (2), -10%) [24], Unfaze-able [15].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Skills

Filch-13 [2], Knife-13 [1], Stealth-14 [4], Throwing-13 [2].

Attacks

Large Knife-13, 1d-2 cut/1d-2 imp, Reach C/1, Parry 8.

Equipment

Large knife, leather armor, \$50.

ties.

Shrake is a rather fortunate young man. Despite living in such a hostile world, he is rather lucky and always manages to emerge from desperate situations in one piece.

"My cause is just. Victory is guaranteed."

Bastion

Bastion is the product of a very challenging childhood. His father was an abusive drunk, who terrorized he and his sister. Not only was Bastion's father violent, but lecherous as well. One night when he was deep in his cups, Bastion's father turned a leering eye toward his daughter. Bastion would not allow such a violation and beat his father into submission. The old drunk was driven away, nursing a number of cuts and bruises. In order to support his sister, Bastion armed and armored himself in the hopes of earning a good salary as an adventurer for hire.

Bastion is a strapping young man, with good looks, deep voice and an air of confidence. Most people cannot help but pause when he walks by or speaks.

Shrake (135 points)

SM 0 (5' 11" tall, 195 lbs.);
ST 12 [20], DX 11 [20], IQ 10, HT 12 [20];
HP 12, Will 10, Per 10, FP 12;
Basic Lift 36, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+1;
Basic Speed 5.75, Basic Move 5 (Move 4 due to light encumbrance);
Dodge 9 (-1 for light encumbrance, shield), Parry 11 (broadsword, shield), Block 12 (medium shield);
DR 4 (scale armor).

Advantages and Perks

Extraordinary Luck [30].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bad Temper (6) [-20].

Skills

Brawling-13 [4], Broadsword-13 [8], Crossbow-13 [4], First Aid-12 [2], Riding (horse)-13 (8), Shield-14 [8].

Attacks

Crossbow-13, 1d+3 imp, Acc 4, Range 240/300, RoF 1, Shots 1(4), Bulk -6;
Punch-13, 1d-1 cr, Reach C, Parry 9;
Thrusting Broadsword-13, 1d+2 cut/1d+1 imp, Reach 1, Parry 9.

Equipment

Thrusting broadsword, crossbow, 20 bolts, scale armor, medium shield, \$20.

Bastion (112 points)

SM 0 (6' 1" tall, 210 lbs.);
ST 13 [30], DX 11 [20], IQ 10, HT 12 [20];
HP 13, Will 10, Per 10, FP 12;
Basic Lift 34, Damage: Thr 1d/Sw 2d-1;
Basic Speed 5.75, Basic Move 5 (Move 4 due to light encumbrance);
Dodge 9 (-1 for light encumbrance, shield), Parry 11 (broadsword, shield), Block 12 (medium shield);
DR 5/3 (double mail hauberk).

Advantages and Perks

Attractive [4], Charisma 3 [15], Voice [10].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Code of Honor (soldier's) [-10], Honesty (9) [-15].

Skills

Brawling-13 [4], Broadsword-13 [8], First Aid-12 [2], Leadership-12 [8], Riding (horse)-13 [8], Shield-14 [8].

Attacks

Punch-13, 1d cr, Reach C, Parry 9;
Thrusting Broadsword-13, 2d cut/1d+2 imp, Reach 1, Parry 9.

Equipment

Thrusting broadsword, double mail hauberk, medium shield, \$25.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
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On Point

I've been experiencing a fair amount of rpg-related nostalgia lately, longing for games I used to play and missing the people with whom I rolled the dice. As Robert Plant would sing, "It's been a long time since rock and roll."

This week I continue with some more GURPS 4e. While browsing through the Reaper Miniatures page, I came across a trio of awesome little robots. One of them is armed with a freaking chainsaw! The robots reminded me of some previous issues of Iridia (11 and 62) that featured mechanical destructo-bots, so I thought I'd push that story line along a little further.

In other game news, I'll be continuing with my D&D 3.5 campaign. We'll be assembling for our ninth session and I look forward to seeing what kind of mayhem ensues. You can check our progress at IridiaZine.net/quest.htm.

Until next time, Christian



The Stranger At My Door

gurps 4e

When I opened the door to see who had been knocking, I was rather surprised. A well-dressed man in a black suit, white shirt and silk tie stood on my doorstep. He was roughly 6' tall and athletic in build. His brown hair was cut short, but I couldn't see his eyes because of his mirrored sun glasses.

Most striking of all was the curious weapon he held in his right hand. It looked like a toy or a prop, something you might see in an old sci-fi movie.

"Are you Mr. Reed?" asked the stranger.

"No." I was lying, of course. Who was this clown, anyway?

"I was sent here to collect the robot you have in your possession."

Now this was something of a surprise. A few months ago one of my students - Miguel - was assaulted by a surly little robot. He was saved when his older sister knocked the thing's head off. Miguel brought the robot to me and I then passed it along to an engineer friend at Cal Poly Pomona. (See Iridia 11.)

"Listen," I said. "I have no idea what you are talking about, so why don't take your ray-gun back to whatever movie set you stole it from."

The man shook his head slowly then said, "That is very unfortunate." He raised the odd-looking pistol and pulled the trigger.

I tried to slam the door in his face as he was doing so, but I was too slow. A deafening whine assaulted my ears, then I slumped to the floor unable to move. It was as if I had no control over my muscles. Most humiliating of all, I lost control of my bodily functions. And by that I mean I soiled myself. As I lay on the floor, the stench of my own filth consuming my senses, the strange man methodically ransacked my home. Not finding what he was looking for, he casually walked out.



Ashamed and embarrassed, I finally got off the floor and cleaned myself up. I considered calling for help, but what would I say? "Hello, 911? A man dressed like a character from the Reservoir Dogs just shot me with a ray gun. Or maybe it was a phaser. I don't know."

I thought better about it and instead called my friend in Pomona. I think he might be getting a visitor very soon.

Mr. Drew works for a secretive lab that develops and builds robots. Their methods are so advanced that they can produce technologies at a TL 9. The name of the company, its location and roster of employees are a closely guarded secret.

Mr. Drew is a trouble-shooter, ensuring that security remains tight. He keeps the public at a safe distance and cleans up any messes that the runaway robots cause.

Like so many people in Los Angeles, Mr. Drew has a rather complicated private life. Wanted by law enforcement, his employer has used its considerable resources to create a new identity for him. As a result, he is extremely loyal and will not hesitate to do anything they ask.

Mr. Drew (169 points)

SM 0 (6' 1" tall, 180 lbs.);
ST 12 [20], DX 12 [40], IQ 11 [20], HT 12 [20];
HP 12, Will 11, Per 12 [5], FP 12;
Basic Lift 29, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+2;
Basic Speed 6.0, Basic Move 6;
Dodge 9, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Alternate Identity (illegal) [15], High TL 1 [5], Patron (employer) (fairly powerful organization, available quite often) [20], Wealth (comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Compulsive Behavior (carousing) [-5], Secret (imprisonment) [-20], Social Disease [-5].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-13 [4], Beam Weapons (projector)-14 [4], Brawling-13 [2], Computer Operation-13 [4], Detect Lies-12 [4], Driving (automobile)-12 [2], Electronics Operation (surveillance)-12 [4], Fast Talk-12 [4], Liquid Projector (sprayer)-13 [2], Lockpicking-12 [4], Observation-12 [2], Photography-12 [4], Stealth-13 [4].

Attacks

Nausea Pistol-14, HT-3 aff (1 yard), Acc 3, Range 9/27, RoF 1, Shots 66 (3), Rcl 1;
Pocket Aerosol Spray with Sleep Gas-13, HT-6 or Unconsciousness, Acc Jet, Range 1, RoF 1, Shots 1, Rcl 1.

Equipment

Nausea Pistol*, pocket aerosol spray can*, flat-cam*, laser microphone*, Palm Treo 700wx Smartphone, 2008 BMW M3.

*see GURPS Ultra Tech for a description of this item.



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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

Back in the 80s I ran a 1e AD&D campaign that lasted for 50 sessions. Years later, there was a GURPS 3e game that ran for 20 sessions. Those are my two longest campaigns. Everything else has been in the 5-10 session range. I haven't had a lot of luck in keeping things rolling. Fortunately, my current group and I are poised for a respectable run with our D&D 3.5 game.

We've met for 10 sessions at the time of writing. I'm really hoping that we can play another 10 games at least. Now that the PCs are reaching 5th level, our battles will start to get really interesting. This week I'd like to share a few maps from our recent adventures. You can read more about our game at www.IridiaZine.net/quest.htm.

Until next time, Christian

Maps of Mystery

d&d 3.5

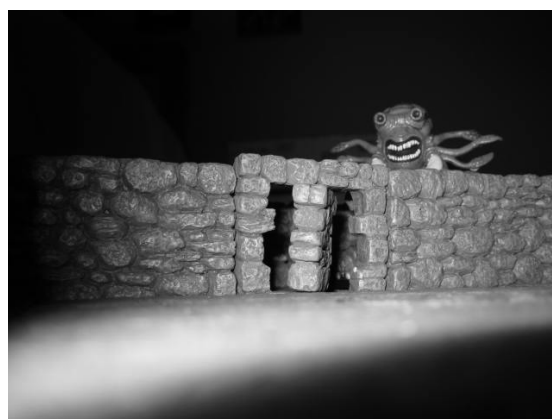
Spelljammer: Adventures in Space was a campaign setting released during the heyday of AD&D 2e. I really miss the avalanche of settings for 2e. Because of TSR's ability to spend, the box sets were all high-quality and well-supported. At any rate, Spelljammer was one of my favorites.

I recently decided to introduce Spelljamming vessels into my campaign. In order to do so, I first had to reveal to the party that there was a new world of adventure among the stars. The characters had opened a magic portal that lead to a small asteroid orbiting their world. The asteroid was home to an enigmatic figure called the Sorcerer King.

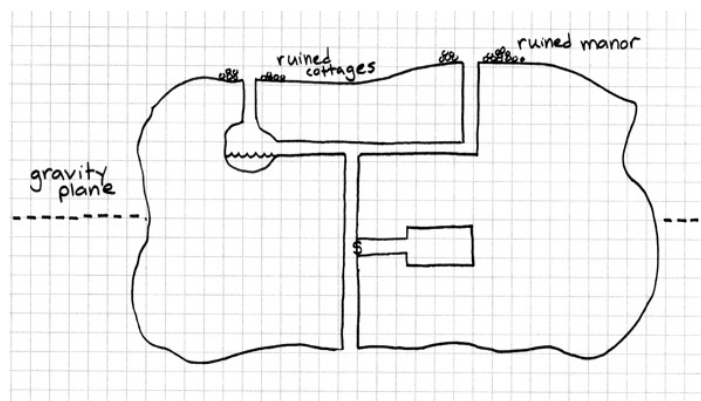
Through his magic, he manipulated events on the world below. The Sorcerer King made quite a few enemies along the way—the elves in particular. They so despised him King that they arranged to have his home incinerated.

The characters explored the charred remains after the event, all the while marveling at the view. "I think I can see my village from way up here!" While exploring they came into contact with some mercenaries, as well as an iron golem and an enormous carrion crawler. Two maps of the asteroid home are presented for your enjoyment.

In a later session—and with their feet back on solid ground—the characters had to climb down into a dark, reeking chamber. (A local



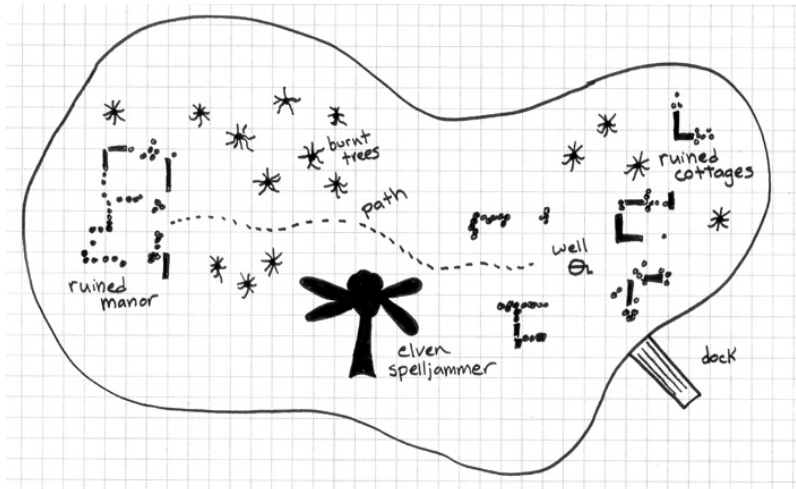
An enormous Carrion Crawler assaulted the party in the tunnels deep within the asteroid.



The party found a secret chamber that contained a long-dead wizard's laboratory.

Ranger/Druid had reported to the group that ghouls were issuing from it on a nightly basis.) Within lurked several ghouls and their ghast leader. The undead had been sealed inside years ago by the Sorcerer King, but after his death the spell ended and the ghouls unleashed. Ravenous, the ghouls began scouring the area for food. Wanting to put an end to the menace, the party went on the offensive and cleansed the nest.

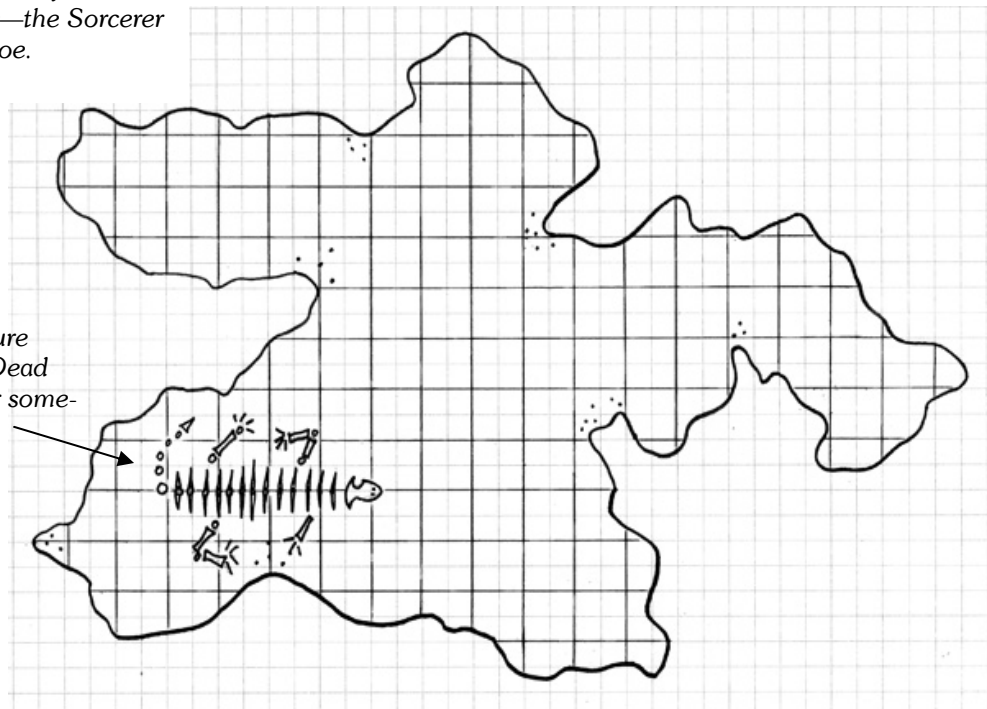
If you want to use any of these maps, digital versions can be found at the Iridia website.



Fourteen ghouls and their ghast leader were entombed in the cave below. When the last heir of the fabled Sorcerer King was slain, the magical seal was broken. The undead now thirst for the blood of elves—the Sorcerer King's hated foe.

When the party arrived on the asteroid, they were met by a few elves from a spelljamming vessel. The elves, Saeros and Aerith (see Iridia 66), informed the group that the formidable Elven Armada had scoured the rock to punish the Sorcerer King.

I'm still not sure what this is. Dead giant lizard or something...



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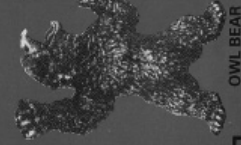
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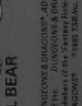
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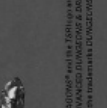
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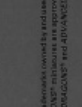
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SOUNDING OFF

letters to the zine

Okay, this first one isn't a letter. It's a quote from Matt Borselli's 1001 Nights And 1 Night Zine. In his most recent issue, Matt wrote about all the great stuff he found while at GenCon. I was stoked when I read the following:

"I found a used game shop that sold me Issues #14 through 27 of Christian Walker's Scrollworks (he writes the Iridia Zine now) for \$15."

Whoa! I am so happy to hear that copies of my old zine are floating round. Who cares if they were in a bargain bin. The point is that someone is still interested in reading them. It is my sincere hope that Iridia can find as loyal of a following as Scrollworks.

Something from an e-mail...

Christian:

I found your email address at a LL (Labyrinth Lord) website. Checked out a couple of your Iridia zines. You have put a lot of work into the campaign setting, and I note, too, that your font is the same one used in the b/x Moldvay editions. Nice.

-John W.

Good eye! The font I used in the first 80 issues of Iridia was Soutane. I'm not sure if it's the exact font used in Moldvay's Basic D&D, but it's close. I'm using Tahoma now, but the titles are still Soutane.

I'm glad you enjoyed my campaign logs. (iridiazine.net/quest.htm) I may not be the best GM on the planet, but I like to think that I am organized. I regret not keeping better track of my old campaigns. In many ways, the articles in Iridia have been an attempt to re-create and preserve my old games. I really miss the people with whom I used to rock the dice.

IRIDIA

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

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ON POINT

I've decided to make another run at the digest format. I flirted with the idea back in Iridia 51, but changed my mind. However, I've never abandoned the idea entirely—it has been in the back of my mind, nagging away. To ensure success, I'm going to commit myself to a minimum of twelve issues in digest format. Twelve issues will give me time to work out the kinks, attract subscribers and fall into a routine.

I'm also going to start small. It takes quite a bit of work to produce a digest. To ease into the process, I will gradually increase the page count. This issue is rather short, but I plan to add four pages per issue until I reach 24 pages.

For this month's offering, I want to build upon the town watch material introduced in Iridia 46 and 47. In Iridia 46, I presented a patrol of watchmen and detailed their organization and tactics. Iridia 47 provided them a home at the Market Street Station. I've used a generic fantasy town called Venable as a setting for those articles, so I will continue with that.

Until next time,
Christian

Guard, male human War1; Medium humanoid (5' 7", 170 lbs); CR 1/2; HD d8+1; hp 9; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;

Armor: AC 14 (+3 studded leather, +1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 13.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +2;

Melee: Shortspear +2 (+1 BAB, +1 str) (d6+1, x2);

Ranged: Shortspear +2 (+1 BAB, +1 dex) (d6+1, x2).

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 13 (+1), Int 14 (+2), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 11.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Gather Information +6, Listen +6, Search +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Investigator.

Possessions: Shortspear, manacles, signal whistle, 3 sp.

Inmate, male human Com1; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 155 lbs); CR 1/4; HD 1d4+1; hp 5; Init +5; Spd 30 ft; AL CE;

Armor: AC 11 (+1 dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +0, Grp +0.

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12 (+1), Con 12 (+1), Int 11, Wis 12 (+1), Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +3; Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Tin cup.

STAT BLOCKS

Sergeant Crayne, male human War2/Ftr2; Medium humanoid (5' 8", 165 lbs); CR 3; HD 2d8+2/2d10+1; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AL LG;
Armor: AC 16 (+4 scale mail, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 14.
Attacks: Base Atk +4, Grp +5;
 Melee: Longsword +7 (+4 BAB, +2 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+2, 19-20/x2).
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3.
Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 15 (+2), Con 13 (+1), Int 12 (+1), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 13 (+1).
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5; Alertness, Iron Will, Negotiator, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword).
Possessions: Longsword, manacles, signal whistle, 5 sp.

Corporal, male human War3; Medium humanoid (5' 10", 170 lbs); CR 2; HD 3d8+7; hp 23; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AL LG;
Armor: AC 15 (+3 studded leather, +2 dex), touch 12, flat-footed 13.
Attacks: Base Atk +3, Grp +6;
 Melee: Longsword +7 (+3 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus) (d8+3, 19-20/x2).
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0.
Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 13 (+2), Con 14 (+2), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.
Languages: Common.
Skills and Feats: Climb +2 (+1 in armor), Intimidate +5, Listen +3, Spot +3; Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword).
Possessions: Longsword, manacles, signal whistle, 5 sp.

ACTUAL PLAY

notes from my game

The characters in my D&D 3.5 campaign (iridiazine.net/quest.htm) have been dealing with followers of Hextor. Most recently, a 3rd level cleric named Sister Aven Mallory (see Iridia 72) tried to assassinate the party's wizard and cleric. The party managed to slay Sister Aven and her underlings, so I need to start planning ahead. Eventually, the party will have to deal with a higher-level worshipper of Hextor in order to keep things interesting. Flipping through the Monster Manual, I think I've found the ideal candidate.

"I will rend their flesh and pierce their hearts."

Hulcrim the Fierce

Hulcrim is a manticore. It's important to state that up front, because it's the first thing that everyone notices about him. Far more intelligent than others of his kind, Hulcrim believes that he was blessed by Hextor himself—at least, that's what he was taught by the cleric who befriended him.

Hulcrim was abandoned by his mother and left to fend for himself. An aspiring cleric named August Storn found the pup and took him on as a pet. Hulcrim grew quickly and became fiercely loyal to August, forever grateful to the cleric. August took advantage of this loyalty and used Hulcrim's power to advance his standing in Hextor's church.

Over time, Hulcrim was inspired by Hextor's teachings. The beast took all of the chants, hymns and theology to heart. Because of his unwavering faith, Hulcrim was blessed with clerical abilities. Hulcrim now believes that in the next life he will rise as a great and terrible devil, able to crush the enemies of his dark god at will.

Hulcrim still serves at the right hand of August Storn. Furious at the death of Sister Aven Mallory, August has dispatched Hulcrim to hunt down and slay those responsible.

Hulcrim the Fierce, manticore C1r2; Large magical beast (10' long, 1,000 lbs); CR 7; HD 6d10+24/2d8+8; hp 73; Init +2; Spd 30 ft, fly 50 ft (clumsy); AL LE;

Armor: AC 17 (-1 size, +2 dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed

15.

Attacks: Base Atk +7, Grp +16;

Melee: Claw +11 (2d4+5, x2);

Ranged: 6 spikes +9 (1d8+2, 19-20/x2);

Full Attack: 2 claws +11 (2d4+5, x2) and bite +9 (1d8+2, x2) or 6

spikes +9 (1d8+2, 19-20/x2).

Space/Reach: 10 ft/5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spikes.

Special Qualities: Cleric spells, darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, scent, smite 1x/day, turn or rebuke undead.

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +3.

Abilities: Str 20 (+5), Dex 15 (+2), Con 19 (+4), Int 9 (-1), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 9 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +5, Spot +9, Survival +1; Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Track, Weapon Focus (spikes).

Cleric Domains: Destruction and Evil.

Spells (4/3+1; save DC 11 + spell level; domain spell marked with

) : 0-Create Water, Cure Minor Wounds, Guidance, Mend; 1-Cause Fear, Cure Light Wounds x2, Protection from Good. (All spells cast at +1 caster level due to Evil domain.)

Possessions: none.

ECL: 11.



The Manticore Sniper (29/60) from the Desert of Desolation series is a rare figure that I used to represent Hulcrim.

so they accept their lot with a small degree of humility and gratitude. At any given time there are 20+2d20 prisoners locked up.

USING THE JAIL IN PLAY

Law-abiding characters might play a role in putting a criminal into jail. If the party apprehends a minor criminal (level 1 or 2 NPC) who is guilty of a modest offense, the Venable jail is the most likely destination for the miscreant. If the party intervenes on behalf of a more serious offender, then perhaps the criminal could be spared the gallows and instead be sentenced to a lengthy sentence in the jail. This might be the case if good-aligned PCs are aware of the jail's rather successful rehabilitation program.

In the event of a riot, the party might be called upon to quell the disturbance if the guards are subdued.

Finally, the party could foil an escape attempt. Perhaps the nephew of a powerful criminal has been incarcerated. Determined that no relative of his will rot in a cell, the crime boss will arrange a jailbreak. The party could get wind of the plan and lay in wait for the rescuers.

Criminal-minded characters may find themselves guests of the jail if they are convicted of a relatively minor crime, such as pick pocketing. Should characters actually kill or seriously hurt someone while committing a crime, death may be the more likely punishment. Violent criminals have a limited shelf life in Venable.

While the options for role-playing in jail are limited, characters doing time might plan an escape. Weapons could be improvised from the wooden bunks or tin mess cups. Alternatively, a character might try to get placed on the jail's work detail program so that he could escape more easily. Referencing a scenario seed for law-abiding characters, rogue PCs might plan and execute a jailbreak for one of their inmate friends. Such an operation would require a great deal of planning and daring!

Hopefully the material in Iridia 46 and 47, combined with this month's offering, will provide a GM enough information to simulate law-enforcement in a fantasy city.

view of criminals, feeling that most should be exiled, executed, or locked away forever.

Guards

The guards work in eight-hour shifts, with eight men to a shift. The jail is small enough that a larger contingent is not needed. In addition to the eight men on duty, Crayne or one of his two corporals is always present.

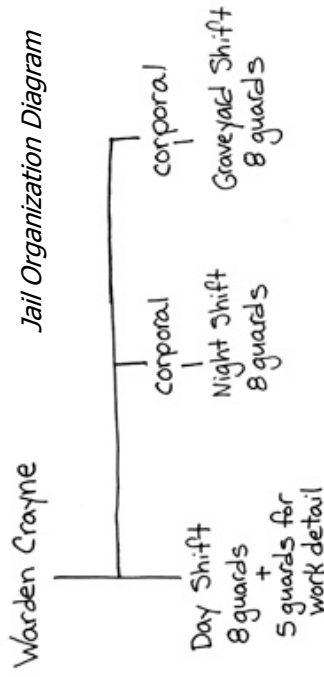
The guards earn 10 gp per month and are willing to augment that income in creative ways. While no guard would accept a bribe to help a prisoner escape, he might pass along a letter, smuggle in some wine, or arrange for a visit with a loved one. These acts are generally accomplished at night for a bribe of 3-5 sp. If a guard were caught, the punishment for a first offense might be a simple talking to, while dismissal from service would be the penalty for a second infraction.

Corporals

Two corporals are present at the jail during the night and graveyard shifts. The men are both competent, although rumor has it that they tend to look the other way when the guards smuggle in wine, letters and loved ones into the jail at night.

Inmates

The criminals incarcerated at the jail are minor offenders and not very skilled. If they were accomplished rogues or brigands, they would have eluded capture and would still be on the streets. Furthermore, if the inmates were truly dangerous, they would have been hung by now. Most inmates simply want to do their time and get out. Many realize that the conditions at the jail are far superior to those found elsewhere,



I DREAM IN 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

The 5th level Wizard in our party has specialized in conjuration. His favorite tactic is to summon a veritable horde of animals that rampage across the battle mat, wreaking havoc upon the party's foes. Because I like to use miniatures in play, it's important to my aesthetic sense to have a figure representing each critter in the wizard's summoning arsenal.

Summon Monster III allows a wizard to conjure a celestial bison—it's nice to know that North American land mammals are alive and well in the D&D cosmology. The bison is a formidable adversary, able to gore a victim for decent damage. However, WotC does not produce a bison miniature. I can buy figures for monsters whose names I can barely pronounce, but no buffalo.

Fortunately, toy buffaloes are fairly easy to come by. A trip to my local toy store yielded one inside a bag of cowboys and Indians. The bison is a Large creature, so I simply needed to make a 2" x 2" base. The back leg of the bison I bought was deformed, so I needed to make a little lump of "earth" for it to stand on using Sculpey. I covered the base with glue, then sprinkled craft sand onto it for texture. I painted the base dark green, then dry-brushed with a lighter shade. The bison was then glued on top.

It now looks pretty decent and will soon be raging across the battle mat in style.



My buffalo is fight.

THE VENABLE JAIL

exploring the freelands of mirrym

Sutter didn't consider himself to be a bad person; he simply lacked the good upbringing and job skills that would allow him to make a respectable living. At least that's what he told himself as the judge berated him.

"For the crime of pick pocketing and resisting arrest, you are sentenced to 30 days in jail."

"30 days? But your honor, I only stole 5 silvers. Surely that sentence is a bit...harsh?" As soon as the words escaped his mouth, Sutter regretted them.

The judge's face grew red as he bellowed, "You're right, young man, perhaps the sentence is inappropriate! Make it 60 days and count yourself lucky that we don't chop off the hands of thieves in this town!"

Sutter could only whimper as he was led away. Sixty days? Well, at least he got to keep his hands.

Venable is a bustling trade center that sits at the intersection of two major caravan routes. Merchants clog the town's streets daily, impatiently loading or unloading their caravans, loudly negotiating deals, and exchanging rumors and news. Accompanying the merchants is an army of porters, teamsters, guards and drovers. With all the money exchanging hands, it's no wonder that a fair number of pickpockets and thieves are present.

Since the town watch was arresting more and more miscreants, Venable's leadership was forced to build a facility to house them. With urging from the church of Pelor, the town leaders decided that rehabilitation would also be a function of the new jail. The two-story, stone building that was eventually constructed is simple, yet functional.

OVERVIEW

The jail houses up to sixty prisoners, who serve sentences ranging from a few weeks to a few years. The town leadership sees little point in spending time and effort incarcerating offenders for truly long periods of time. If a crime is quite serious, a death sentence is handed

g) Guards' Quarters: A few down-on-their-luck guards live at the station. When not on duty, they might be found here. The room features a few bunks, a table and chairs, and some footlockers for storing personal belongings.

h) Guard Station: Four guards are always present in this location, alert for any activity that might indicate a fight among the inmates or an escape attempt. A brazier keeps the area warm in winter, although the cells do not benefit from the heat. A sturdy table provides an eating surface for the guards, as well as a place to play cards during long shifts. A weapons rack containing 6 light crossbows, 60 bolts, 6 halberds, 6 large shields, and 6 clubs is present should an uprising take place.

i) Cells: Each cell houses up to six prisoners, although the number of occupants normally hovers around two or three. (The larger cells would obviously house more prisoners than the smaller ones.) The cells feature crude wooden cots, a chamber pot, and a tin cup for each prisoner's food and water. The prisoners are given three cups of water a day and fed twice: once in the morning and again at night.

The prisoners are released from their cells only if they have demonstrated themselves to be promising candidates for rehabilitation. If this is the case, the fortunate individual will be absent from his cell for eight hours during the day while he or she works with several other prisoners under the supervision of five guards.

The cell doors are made with reinforced wood. An iron bar is slid into place from the outside, then secured with a modest lock.

THE JAIL'S PERSONNEL AND INMATES

Below are descriptions and stat blocks for the jail's staff and prisoners. Stat blocks for the sergeant, corporals, guards and inmates can be found on pages 14-15. A jail organization diagram appears at the bottom of the next page. It illustrates the shifts, number of guards on duty and officer in charge.

Sergeant Crayne

Sergeant Crayne is a seasoned veteran of the town watch. Crayne was chosen for the job because of his high ethical standards, good standing in the community and his commitment to seeing that criminals receive their due punishment. Crayne is skeptical about the jail's ability to rehabilitate inmates via the work program. He has a rather cynical

c) Guards' Living Area: When not tending to the needs of the prisoners or those of their fellow guards, the men who staff the jail will be found resting in this room. There is a fireplace in the west wall, and a few tables and chairs occupy the space where the guards enjoy their meals or pass the time with games of chance.

d) Kitchen: The jail's cook, Mrs. Croft, provides the guards and prisoners with decent fare. The guards eat better than the prisoners, to be sure, but Mrs. Croft ensures that the prisoners' food is fresh and edible. Soup, bread, and water with lemon or mint are the standard fare.

e) Pantry/Storage: In this small room, Mrs. Croft stores dry goods, and the guards keep blankets, manacles, and cleaning supplies.

f) Office: This room used as an office for Sergeant Crayne (the jail's warden) and his two corporals. A bunk is also present for late-night catnaps. A ledger in a desk provides detailed notes on the prisoners, their offences, dates of incarceration, and so on.



down rather than sticking the offender in a cell for a few decades.

Most of the prisoners tend to be minor offenders, convicted of crimes such as burglary, pick pocketing, brawling, and so on. Furthermore, most convicts are first-time offenders. Habitual criminals are only given so many chances to reform before a permanent, life-ending sentence is handed down.

It is important to note that the jail is not equipped to handle powerful NPCs and/or spellcasters; criminals capable of casting spells are incarcerated elsewhere. Furthermore, formidable warriors are more likely to be fined or exiled because of the threat they pose to the guards.

The jail offers a few programs that aim to rehabilitate the inmates. Most popular is a trade-skill training regimen that teaches the prisoners basic work skills. The idea is that after their jail term is over, the inmates will be able to seek out honest employment. For example, a small group of prisoners will form work groups to repair Venable's cobble streets. The inmates learn to cut, fit, then mortar into place replacement cobbles. While this type of work does not pay exceptionally well, it would be an excellent way to begin a humble masonry career.

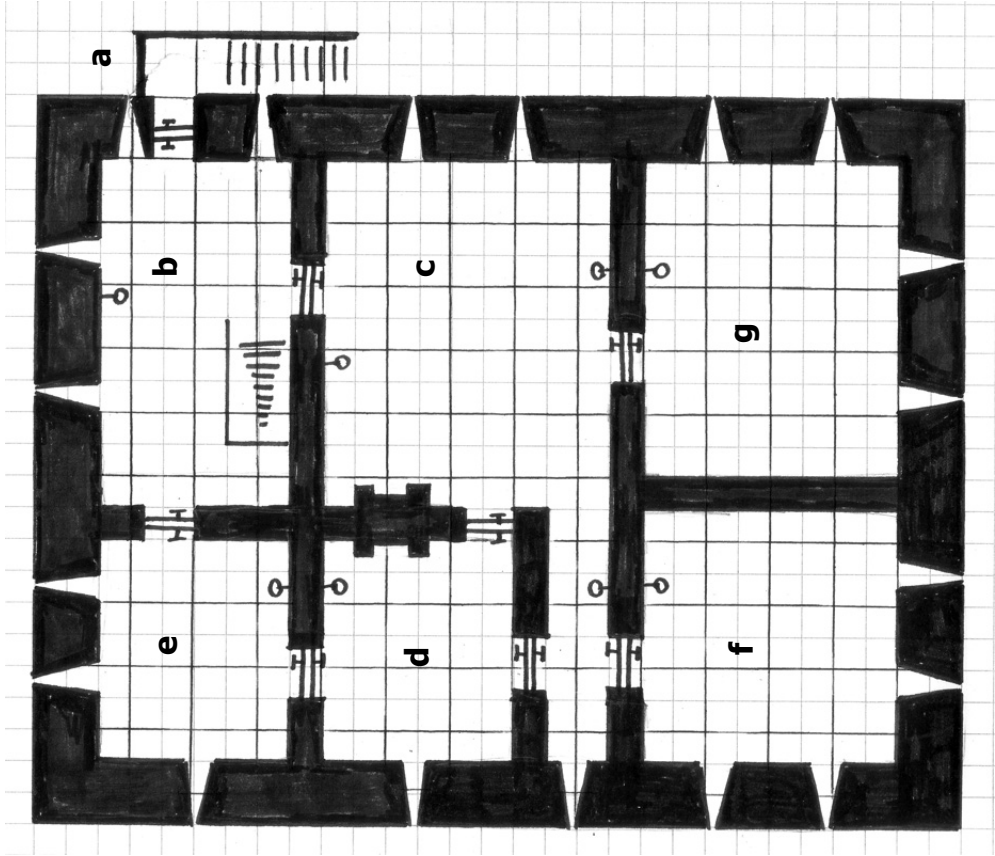
Eight guards and a supervisor are present in the jail at all times to quell any uprisings that might occur. Fortunately, most disturbances are in the form of an unruly prisoner who refuses to roll out for work detail. A few swift kicks and a pounding with a truncheon are about all the coercion needed. Unfortunately, every once in a while, the prisoners riot. This is much more of a serious threat to the guards, so outside help is needed. Duncan Faulk, a local wizard, is always willing to lend a *Sleep* spell or two to if needed.

The guards work in eight-hour shifts, with an additional five guards present during the day. The extra five guards escort the work teams who perform work release duties.

ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

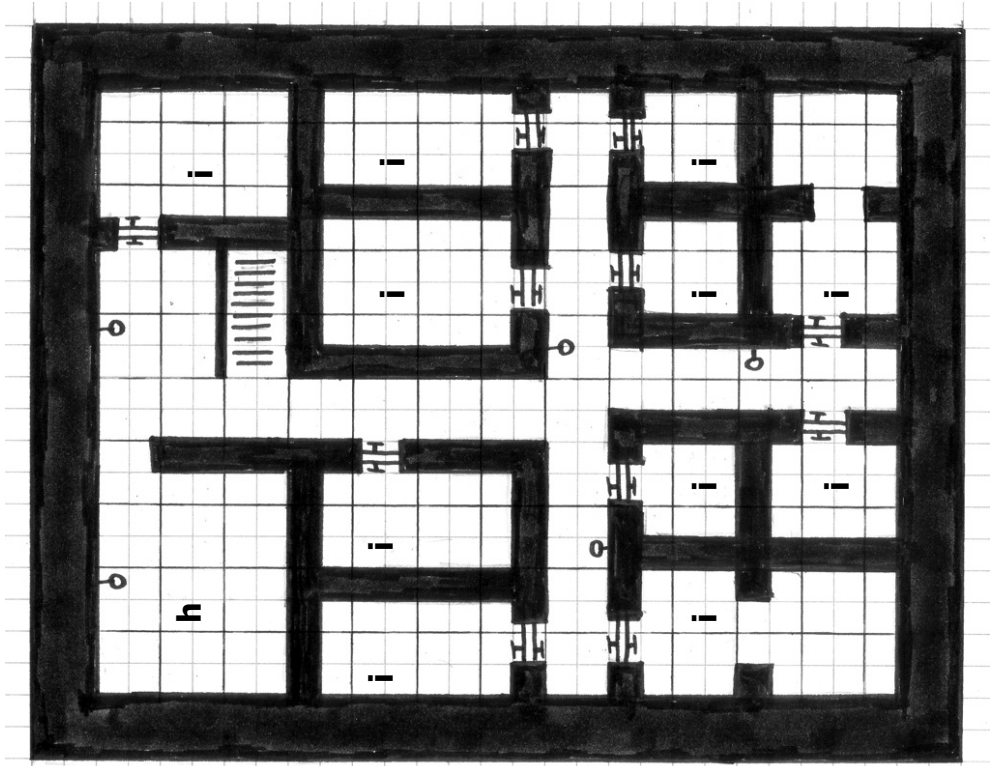
a) Entrance: This is the only way in or out of the jail. A sturdy door is set at the top of a stairway. It is built of iron and secured from the inside with a heavy steel bar. There is a peephole the guards use to inspect individuals on the stoop.

b) Entry: There is always one guard on duty here at all times. This room features stairs leading down into the cells, as well as doors to the pantry and guards' living area.



The Venable Jail

Superior Masonry Walls: 3' thick, Break DC 50, Hardness 8, Hit Points 540 (per 10x10 section);
Front Door (iron door): hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28.
There is no exterior lock;
Cell Doors, strong wooden: 2" thick, hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25, Open Lock DC 25.



Key

one square = 5'

- a) Entrance
- b) Entry
- c) Guards' Living Area
- d) Kitchen
- e) Pantry/Storage
- f) Office
- g) Guards' Quarters
- h) Guard Station
- i) Cells

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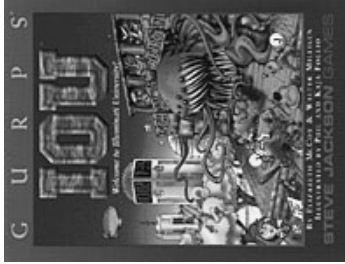
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A B C



NOTES

- 1) I.O.U. - Illuminati University was published for GURPS 3rd Edition and written by Elizabeth McCoy. It was illustrated by Phil and Kaja Foglio. I highly recommend picking up a copy.
- 2) I thought that 1 was a prime number, but I was mistaken. From mathforum.org: "A prime number is a positive integer that has exactly two positive integer factors, 1 and itself... Note that the definition of a prime number doesn't allow 1 to be a prime number: 1 only has one factor, namely 1. Prime numbers have exactly two factors, not "at most two" or anything like that. When a number has more than two factors it is called a composite number."
- 3) This robot was published in Iridia 11 and became the basis for several robot-related GURPS 4e articles.
- 4) I miss playing Car Wars. One memorable campaign involved Boy Scout Commandos. We found rules for Scout Commandos in an issue of Autoduel Quarterly and fell in love with the idea of High School kids with automatic weapons, mostly because we were 14 at the time. In fact, the digest format of ADQ is what inspired my first game rag, Scrollworks, and by extension, Iridia. If anyone has a copy of the ADQ with the Scout Commandos article, I will buy it from you!
- But I digress. I think the idea of Scout Commandos could be extended to Tenure. It'd be neat to have a student club dedicated to hunting down monsters and other supernatural foes. I can see it now, "The Orchid Street Elementary Monster Slayers Club." Awesome!



One of my all time fave supplements.

IRIDIA

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

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ON POINT

When I confess to friends that I play D&D, they are - without exception - intrigued. They all say things like, "That is so old school!" "No way! That is so cool!" Here in Los Angeles, where image is often very important, there's something "vintage" or "kitsch" about table-top rpgs.

From talking to them, I get the sense that there are a lot of campaigns going on (they know people who play), but it's often hard to find an open seat. It would seem that people put together a group of players, gel as a party, then settle in for the long haul. There are few openings for newcomers. I see this on the West LA Meet Up message board where people recruit for games. There just isn't as much activity as I would expect for a city of nearly 4 million inhabitants. I'm happy, though, to have a group of five smart, witty fellows, who put up with my crap as a GM.

This month I have the usual "I dream in 25mm." and "Actual Play" columns. I am also excited to share the "Fragments" article with you. I found some GURPS files on my hard drive and felt that they needed to be dusted off and edited. Finally, I want to continue with a Labyrinth Lord project that I abandoned a few issues back.

Iridia 74, 75, 76 and 77 presented the Freecity of Haldane, which is ruled by a gold dragon named Aurumvorax. I ended the series a bit prematurely and realized that it was time to pick it back up. This month I have some random tables for several wards in the city. Eventually, I'll publish an introductory scenario to get PCs entangled in the city's politics.

Finally, I encourage you to check out this issue's podcast. The podcast provides a bit of commentary and insight that you might find useful.

Until next time,
Christian

I wish that some of the harried children would band together in some sort of mutual-aid society, but that's unlikely. (4) At such a young age, many children are worried about being accused of lying by peers or fear being made fun of. This makes it hard for them to seek out others for assistance. Again, I wish I could help in some sort of supervisory role, but my superiors have strictly forbidden the faculty from, "... engaging students in discussions of fantasy make-believe nonsense. Any student who approaches their teacher with delusional tales are to be referred immediately to the school psychologist."

The school psychologist? A terrible idea, but more on that later. Still, I think I know someone who can help. A former student of mine, who is now in high school, has dealt with similar issues and helps others from time to time. Such communication is risky, since student-faculty interactions are closely monitored. I hope that luck is on my side, because Stephen's case appears dire and I can't sit by and do nothing. [Higher Purpose (aid students) +5]

The awareness of the supernatural I experienced as a child never left me, although its potency has diminished somewhat. The ravages of adult stress, I guess. [Spirit Empathy (1 minute preparation, -20%) +12] In my youth I could simply glance at something that didn't belong and immediately note its bizarre, otherworldly origins. I could even communicate with the spirit, sometimes engaging it in dialogue. It was from those experiences that I learned to be a thoughtful, influential conversationalist. [Voice +10; Diplomacy IQ/Hard; Public Speaking IQ/Avg]

As an adult, I have to concentrate to view supernatural beings. I turn my head to see the object in my peripheral vision. I let my vision go blurry and then I can divine the true nature of a person or thing. It's not uncommon for me to stand still in the hallway, playground or in my class, turning my head this way and that to get a "better look." People have often commented on my strange mannerism, but I just tell them it's an issue with a contact lens. [Bad Sight (nearsighted, contact lenses -60%) -10]

While "adjusting my lenses" I have seen some rather disturbing entities around Orchid Street Elementary, one of these being a student in my class.

was built by his older brother Kirk after ordering some parts and blueprints online. Once assembled, the robot refused to follow instructions and began tearing up the house before escaping. The robot has been lurking near Stephen's house ever since, being most familiar with that area.

I hear stories like that all the time. If it's not Iron Man coming over to a student's house for pizza, it's a 3' tall, killer robot. Nevertheless, I offered sincere advice. Stephen may, in fact, have robot troubles. God knows I have seen stranger things.

I suggested that Stephen and his friends set up a little ambush of their own. Don't bother telling any other adults; they won't take it seriously. I advised Stephen to allow the robot to chase one of his friends into a narrow space where some other kids with bats can pounce, then pound the robot into submission. I added that a hose might help to short out the robot's electrical systems. Stephen still looked worried as he gripped his drawing tightly. I wish I could do more, like hit the robot with my car or blast it with my pistol, but the staff handbook forbids faculty from mixing with (or intervening on the behalf of) students after school.

TRANSMISSIONS FROM PIPER

Sometimes you must look to the past, to see the future.

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ACTUAL PLAY

notes from my game

High Priest August Storn leads 60 slave laborers, 100 warriors and 6 clerics in the name of Hextor. Like all followers of Hextor, August's goal is simple: Enslave those who resist his rule, exploit those who accept and prepare for the afterlife. I've explained to my players that followers of Hextor are solely motivated by power. They wish to obtain power in this world, then carry it into the next by assuming great and terrible forms when they rise again.

As GM, I don't play August or his minions with any subtlety. They are homicidal maniacs. Disciplined, but homicidal all the same. That may be an over-simplification of their motivations and alignment, but this is D&D. I don't need things to be overly complex.

The rampaging followers of Hextor travel in a large Spelljamming vessel called the Iron Crusade. So far they have managed to raid a few small villages and in the process destroy rival churches and spread fear. The PCs in my D&D 3.5 campaign have – of course – emerged as a thorn in August Storn's side. The PCs simply refuse to submit and have managed to slay three clerics and at least 15 warriors. They also killed his manticores pet, which I presented in Iridia 81. That *really* pissed August off.

August now feels that the party has been placed in his path as a test from Hextor. If he can slay the party, his lord will be pleased. If he fails, well, he deserves whatever horrific fate Hextor has in store. While I'm not sure what the final conflict will entail, I'd like it to be grand.



The Warpriest of Hextor is a Rare (#45) from WotC's Deathknell expansion. I bought him on eBay from a seller called "Minut." If you want fast, reliable shipping, please visit his eBay store.

August Storn, human C1r8; Medium humanoid (human) (6' 1", 180 lbs); CR 8; HD 8d8+19; hp 58; Init +0; Spd 20 ft; AL LE;

Armor: AC 18 (+8 full plate), touch 10, flat-footed 18.

Attacks: Base Atk +6/+1, Grp +9;

Melee: Flail +12 (+6 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +2 flail +2) (1d8+5, x2);

Full Attack: Flail +12 (+6 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +2 flail +2) (1d8+5, x2) and flail +7 (+1 BAB, +3 str, +1 weapon focus, +2 flail +2) (1d8+5, x2).

Special Qualities: Cleric spells, smite 1x/day (+4 to hit/+8 to damage), turn or rebuke undead.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +9.

Abilities: Str 16 (+3), Dex 10, Con 15 (+2), Int 12 (+1), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 14 (+2).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +12, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5; Cleave, Combat Casting, Martial Weapon Proficiency (flail), Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (flail).

Cleric Domains: Destruction and War.

Spells (6/5+1/4+1/4+1/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level; domain spell marked with *): 0-*Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Light, Mending, Purify Food and Drink, Read Magic, 1-Cause Fear, Command, Doom, Inflict Light Wounds**, *Protection from Good, Protection from Chaos, 2-Bull's Strength, Darkness, Eagle's Splendor, Shatter**, *Zone of Truth, 3-Animate Dead, Contagion**, *Cure Serious Wounds X2, Wind Wall, 4-Cure Critical Wounds, Divine Power**, *Spell Immunity*.

Possessions: Holy symbol, +2 flail, full plate.

munication with the outside world, especially to emergency services. Many nights of restless sleep and anxious dreams [Insomnia -10] have driven me to consume considerable amounts of melatonin tablets and other over the counter sleep aids to ease the transition into sleep. I do not trust that my medical records are confidential, hence the lack of physician-prescribed medication. Needless to say, I arise more than a little groggy.

Before stumbling into the shower, I unload my 9mm, which rests on the bedside table. [Guns (pistol) DX/Easy] When people ask me about my gun ownership, I tell them that I live in a rather poor neighborhood and worry that my humble abode may be the object of a home invasion robbery. This, of course, is a deception. My pistol provides protection - and some degree of comfort - when I am away from Orchid Street. While my tenure keeps me safe there, it's useless outside school grounds. [I had considered the Paranoia disadvantage, but it's not paranoia if they really are out to get you.]

I try to look for greater meaning and insight while performing even the simplest activities, like attendance. Recently I've been able to identify a few noteworthy trends.

Marcus is always absent the day after a full or new moon. There's little room left for interpretation in regards to that. Julia's attendance is a bit more puzzling. She is either tardy or absent on the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 11th, 17th, 19th, 23rd, 27th, 29th, and 31st. (2) For the life of me, I cannot figure out why that shy, pale girl is governed by prime numbers.

Student work offers many insights into their lives. Most children produce artwork and writing that is appropriate for their age and reflects the kinds of people and interests one would expect a seven or eight year old to be involved with - family, hobbies, daydreams, etc. What stands out are drawings and stories that are beyond the norm.

For example, Stephen recently shared with me a drawing of a robot with long claws and a flashlight on one arm. The boy seemed rather agitated while drawing, practically stabbing the paper with his pencil. When I asked him about the drawing, he shared with me a rather frightening tale. (3)

He told me that the robot was short, about 3' tall, and had a nasty habit of hiding in bushes. When he or his friends would walk by, it would leap out, claws raking and eyes glowing. Apparently, the robot

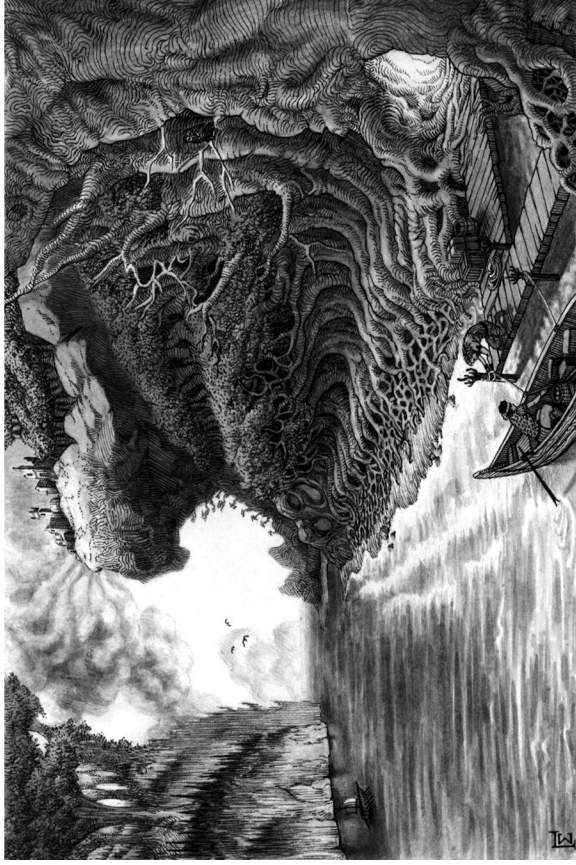
TENURE

Before launching Iridia, I began work on a mini-supplement. It was a mix of Buffy, Little Fears, GURPS I.O.U (1) and Monsters and Other Childish Things. The project ran out of steam, but I still think it has promise.

My name is Mr. Reed and I teach [Teaching IQ/Average] 2nd grade at Orchid Street Elementary School. My tenure [Tenure +5] affords me certain protections and latitude in my daily duties. In light of this, I'd like to share some of my experiences in order to inform you of the nature of education in this country and to warn people about the challenges students and educators face. At times, you may find yourself doubting the veracity of my statements. However, everything I've written is the truth, or as close to the truth as I am able to recall. Certain events have been so shocking to my system that I am often unable to record them with perfect accuracy.

My day begins at 6:30 when the alarm clock feature on my cell phone begins to beep without mercy. My phone never leaves my side. [Quirk -1] It is extremely important that I have quick, convenient com-

Get back to basics. Play the new Wayfarers Roleplaying Game.



I DREAM IN 25mm. miniatures and terrain

I'm a big fan of Dwarven Forge. Their hand-painted, resin-cast dungeon tiles are exquisite in detail. Combined with WotC's miniatures, they add an exciting visual element to any session. Recently I purchased two sets: the Medieval Building Set (\$99) and the Medieval Building Expansion Set (\$79). Although expensive, I feel that they are well worth it.

The sets allow the GM to create a variety of fantasy/feudal buildings, such as inns, taverns or homes. They also come with beds, walls that have candlestick holders protruding from them (complete with dripping wax) and floor pieces with a visible wood grain. Stairs and stone columns even allow for two-storey constructions.

Our group used the tiles in a session and everyone thoroughly enjoyed them. In the photo above, you can see the beds, windows and two level construction. The elaborate set-up allowed us to quickly adjudicate game issues like line of sight, AOOs and movement.

To make the game run more smoothly, I set up the tiles beforehand. When it came time for combat, I quickly moved the pieces onto the table. Building the terrain in advance allowed me to make sure that everything fit well together. It also gave me time to anticipate any challenges posed by the 3D environment, like would there be enough room for the minis to maneuver in the house?

I look forward to many more sessions with the Medieval Building sets!



WHAT DO I SEE?

labyrinth lord

Iridia 74-77 presented a city called Haldane that could be used with the Labyrinth Lord rpg. Governed by Aurumvorax, a gold dragon, Haldane is a cosmopolitan trade center. It also has a reputation as a place for magical learning. Its diverse wards are sure to keep any visitor intrigued and stimulated.

Below are random encounters (both day and night) for several of the city's wards. The GM should feel free to elaborate upon each entry as needed. Some of the entries might lead to role-playing or combat encounters, while others are designed to answer that common PC question, "So, what do I see on the street?"

The daytime tables require a d6 to generate an encounter, while a d4 is needed for nighttime events. If race is not mentioned, assume the entry describes humans.

TRADES WARD

Day

- 1) A master craftsman berates an underling for improperly cutting some wooden planks. He holds a cane in his hand and is about to beat the poor fellow, who trembles with fear.
- 2) Six porters push through the street, carrying heavy boxes (cases of wine). They bowl through the crowd, knocking down an old man who falls hard to the ground. They don't bother to stop or apologize.
- 3) A wealthy merchant walks down the street, an assistant trailing behind him. The merchant appears to be very wealthy, as he and his underling are dressed quite nicely.
- 4) Three craftsmen stand outside a workshop, drinking wine from a flask during a break. They leer at passing women and make loud, crass remarks.
- 5) A wagon makes its way down the crowded lane. The drover yells loudly for the crowd to part and begins cracking his whip above people's heads.

Over the past few weeks you have pulled some decent goods out of an area that might have been a retail center before the warheads fell out of the sky. Fortunately, opposition from a rival cadre [Enemy (medium sized, formidable group, rarely appearing) -15] has been nonexistent, but you know that good luck doesn't last forever. It's only a matter of time before an enemy patrol, or some depraved, starving Scaver ambushes you.

Scavengers, Scavers for short, are pretty scary to deal with. Completely insane, they are known to do some pretty sick stuff to their victims. It's not enough that they rip you apart, but they insist on doing "things" to your dead body. Nasty. Better make sure a round is racked into your auto pistol. Any Scaver pervert that messes with you will get his head ventilated by some 10mm caseless ammo. [Guns (pistol) DX/E]

Your favorite scrounging area is about two hours from your cadre's base. Since you're still recovering from a flu induced by a strain of the T-X virus, you decide to take a short break about half-way there. [ST -1, HT -1 (temporary)] You find a shady spot, drink some fluids and stare at an old holo-mag for a few minutes. The power cells of most holographic magazines only last a few months, but with some tampering [Electronics Repair IQ/A] this one has lasted a few years. It's your prized possession because it depicts images of the offworld possibilities you hope to one day obtain.

Many thanks to Peter Crafts for illustrating Rubble. Please visit his online gallery at gameartist.carbonmade.com

RUBBLE

About 12 years ago, I wanted to run a post-apocalyptic, sci-fi game. The characters would be survivors of an orbital bombardment. Their world had descended into anarchy and was at a low tech-level (8 or 9) as a result. Most survivors had organized themselves into rival cadres. The PCs' goal was to survive long enough to eventually get offworld and wreak vengeance upon the forces that brought ruin to their home. I wrote a bit of fiction to help illustrate the setting for the players.

It's a typical day amid the rubble that was once a thriving metropolis. Most begin with a variation of the following speech by Cadre Leader "Patch" McKenzie:

"Well, it appears that our stores of ammunition are almost completely gone. Say, could you explain to me what is the point of having weapons if we don't have any freaking ammo?! I thought you were the assistant quartermaster! Get on this and get on it now before those maniacs catch us with our pants down. I, for one, don't plan on going into a firefight armed with an empty weapon!

What would you have me use? Harsh language? Get out there and find some ammo, now. I said now! What the hell are you still doing here?!"

Might as well get to the task of scrounging ammo, [Scrounging Per/E] because there's no sense pondering the series of events that led to your homeworld being blasted by orbital bombardment. Most quartermasters' assistants [Rank 1 +5] get their job because of keen administrative skills, but not you. Nope, an innate ability to find usable goods amid the twisted metal and plasti-crete of the city made you invaluable to your cadre. [Ally Group (100% starting PC cost, 100 members, appears almost all of the time) +180; Duty (almost all of the time, hazardous) -20] In his rare good moods, your cadre leader jokes that you could scrounge up a virgin in a whorehouse. That always makes you laugh. When you ask if you could test that theory out, however, you get chastised. Whatever.

You put on your ballistic vest, helmet, grab your scrounge bag and make sure your weapon is ready to rock, then head for the exit. You locate the old elevator shaft that leads out of your shelter and begin the long climb up. After a few minutes of effort you make it to the remnants of a parking garage. You chat with the sentries at the perimeter for a few minutes before heading out to your favorite hunting ground.

- 6) A dwarf blacksmith stands in the door of his shop, showing off a wonderfully-crafted sword. The warrior he is presenting it to holds up an exquisite gem as payment.

Night

- 1) A halfling with a bag over his shoulder, runs out of an alley, spots the PCs, then runs back in.
- 2) At the end of a long day, two craftsmen walk down the middle of road, tipsy from too many pints at the tavern.
- 3) Four members of the city watch shine a lantern into an alley as if looking for someone.
- 4) Five teamsters load a wagon in the middle of the night. (They are hoping to get an early start on an overland journey the next morning.)

MARKET SQUARE

Day

- 1) A halfling farmer sells turnips from a cart. He tells anyone who will listen that turnips are good for the heart.
- 2) A fishmonger holds smelly carp in the faces of passer-bys, begging them to make a purchase.
- 3) A young man rushes through the crowd, dodging shoppers with impressive dexterity Not long after, a member of the city watch gives chase.
- 4) A very happy dwarf rolls a wheelbarrow laden with a keg of ale through the market square.
- 5) A woman screams at a merchant, upset that she has been sold low-quality beef.
- 6) Patting his bulging pouch, a well-dressed man walks past the party and says to himself, "Yes, today was a very good day indeed."

Night

- 1) Too tired to push his cart home for the night, a merchant snoozes under it.
- 2) Two men quietly discuss a private matter.

- 3) A beggar carefully walks the square, looking for dropped coins.
- 4) Two men with lanterns escort a cloaked figure. (They are members of the Night Watch.)

THE GLEN

Day

- 1) Three human guards approach the PCs and demand to know their business.
- 2) Two elves quietly have a discussion under a shade tree.
- 3) An elven woman plays a flute while watching the street below.
- 4) Two halfling porters carry wrapped packages.
- 5) A well-dressed dwarf strides down the road, smiling broadly.
- 6) Three human guards approach the PCs and ask if they are lost.

Night

- 1) A beautiful woman dressed in fine silks is escorted down the street by a bodyguard with a lantern.
- 2) Two elves chat on a corner before embracing, then parting ways.
- 3) An owl lands atop a streetlamp and eyes the party.
- 4) Four guards approach the party and ask if they can be of service.

THE NIGHT MARKET

Day

- 1) Three dwarfs in plate armor with gold accents talk quietly among themselves. (They are members of the Order of the Dragon.)
- 2) Children play a game of tag.
- 3) Two lovers walk slowly through the square.
- 4) The square is empty. A few leaves blow in the wind.
- 5) A mangy hound scratches at fleas.
- 6) A merchant checks his wares as he prepares for the evening.

about this evening's events."

Mr. Thomas Cheatham, accountant [Accounting IQ/Hard]

"People don't live in this city; they haunt it. They drift through their lives, barely repressing a sorrowful moan as they go. It's awful." [Chronic Depression (12) -15; Hidebound -10; No Sense of Humor -10]

Thomas Fleury, cab driver

"A man came and took my mother away. He didn't say anything. He just stood at the open door and beckoned to her with one hand. She quietly got up from the dinner table and walked out, head down. Father just sat there, staring at his plate. I asked him where she was going, but he didn't answer. He just sat there. [Low Empathy -20] In a little while he started eating again and so did I. I felt empty inside. I knew I should be crying or feeling angry, but I couldn't. [Confused -10] Now I can't even remember what mother looked like. Why aren't I bothered?"
Julissa Sprig, age 13

"People don't live in this city; they haunt it. They drift through their lives, barely repressing a sorrowful moan as they go. It's awful."



Many thanks to Christopher Tupã for illustrating "The Dark."
www.flickr.com/tupa

travelogue. It featured photographs of beautiful gardens. The colors were simply remarkable - yellow, lavender, red, but mostly green. Sadly, I could not stand the strain that was placed upon my eyes and spent the better part of an hour slumped over, massaging my temples. [Revulsion, very common (bright colors) -15] The dark is less painful, easier

The following day - fortified by drink and sleep - I returned to the place where I found the books, but they were all gone. A thin, dangerous-looking man was there instead. I inquired about the book with the photographs and he told me that such things were bad for my health, that to pursue such frivolities only ends in pain. [Enemy (large group with some extremely formidable/supernatural beings, hunter) -40] Maybe he was right. Just standing in that room where the colorful images had once been caused me to feel faint. I turned and walked out, wanting to run, but lacking the will. [Will (-2) -10]

I eventually caught a trolley to return me to the dark confines of my apartment. Trolleys cut through the fog of our dismal streets regularly. Their path is determined by a series of grooves that lay in the middle of the thoroughfares. I'd never paid these grooves much attention until I stumbled and fell after catching my foot in one as I exited the car. I don't know what it was that compelled me to look into the channel, but I did.

I was shocked to see a great space beneath the road, almost like a tunnel. Just then I sensed movement within the dark, a sort of lurching. A great black shape shambled below me, a thick cable over its monstrous, black shoulders. I turned around to see a trolley car bearing down on me and barely managed to escape being run over. I don't know what that thing was beneath the streets, but if that's what propels the streetcars, I don't think I'll be using that mode of transportation again. [Phobia (strange and unknown things) (9) -22]

I think that I will need to drink heavily [Alcoholism -15] to forget

Night

- 1) Two lovers enjoy a deep kiss. A nearby couple watches intently, playful smiles upon their faces.
- 2) A merchant hawks silk scarves. He says that they can enhance romantic encounters.
- 3) An attractive woman asks one of the characters if they need company for the evening.
- 4) A merchant offers the party an herbal tea that he claims can increase one's libido.

THE WARRENS

Day

- 1) A harried mother screams at her misbehaving children.
- 2) Four dirty children beg the party for coins.
- 3) An old drunk lays slumped against a wall.
- 4) A member of the city watch stands in the middle of the street, shaking his head as an elderly woman yells at him.
- 5) Three young toughs stare at the party from an alley.
- 6) A cleric of Elysween helps an elderly man walk down the street.

Night

- 1) A drunk staggers up to the party and asks if they can buy him some ale.
- 2) Three men with lanterns inquire about the welfare of a drunk laying in the street. (They are members of the Night Watch.)
- 3) In an alley, a man gropes a lady of the night.
- 4) From behind closed doors, a couple screams at one another.

COMPASS STREET

Day

- 1) A cleric of Weyoun the Wanderer blesses a merchant, his two wagons, drovers and guards.
- 2) A pretty woman asks the party if they would like to donate to a feed



"I don't know what that thing was beneath the streets, but if that's what propels the streetcars, I don't think I'll be using that mode of transportation again."

the poor fund sponsored by the church of Elyswen.

- 3) A cleric of Risa the Bountiful offers the party an apple from her basket.
- 4) A dwarf walks down the street, waving off the cleric of Elyswen who asks him for a donation.
- 5) Three city watchmen quickly escort a babbling, wild-haired man down the street. The gibbering prophet screams of doom and hellfire.
- 6) A street urchin offers to sell the party good luck charms for a few coppers each.

Night

- 1) A cleric of Elyswen hands out loaves of bread to a line of poor people.
- 2) Four men fill lanterns with oil. (They are members of the Night Watch preparing for their rounds.)
- 3) Three acolytes wash down the steps in front of the church of Risa the Bountiful.
- 4) Two worshippers hurry home after a late night prayer meeting.

FRAGMENTS

gurps 4e

I bought GURPS 3rd edition revised in 1995. (Or was it 94?) I was immediately inspired by the game. Its generic quality meant that I could simulate any type of setting. I loved the point buy, skill-based character creation and the gritty, hard-hitting combat system. Over the years I've fiddled with various campaigns. One fantasy campaign lasted 20 sessions (see Iridia 78), while the others were always short-lived. I looked through my files and found the notes for three games that never saw the light of day.

I present them here in their unfinished state. Perhaps there is something that you might find useful or inspirational. I apologize if they end rather abruptly, but they are fragments after all. The three partial ideas – The Dark, Rubble and Tenure – have game mechanics referenced throughout. I never got around to writing up formal stat blocks. Instead, I tinkered, trying to figure out what mechanical elements might be relevant. Enjoy.

THE DARK

I envisioned a campaign that dealt with dark and disturbing themes. The party would be comprised of individuals who had become aware of just how corrupt and nonsensical their surroundings were. As the PCs delved deeper into the mystery, they would come to understand that their reality was manipulated by mysterious, dangerous entities. I wrote a series of vignettes for flavor. They illustrate the fact that the PCs would be severely disadvantaged, but that would make their struggle all the more heroic. Alas, nothing ever came of the idea.

"Why don't people notice that it's always dark? And why does it always rain? For the life of me I can't remember the last time I felt the sun on my face or experienced rich, vibrant colors. [Amnesia -10] Today I was determined to reacquaint myself with those lost pleasures. I went in search of books that might offer a glimpse of nature.

I went to an abandoned school and slipped in through an open door. Inside the library, beneath a rotting stack of tomes, I found a

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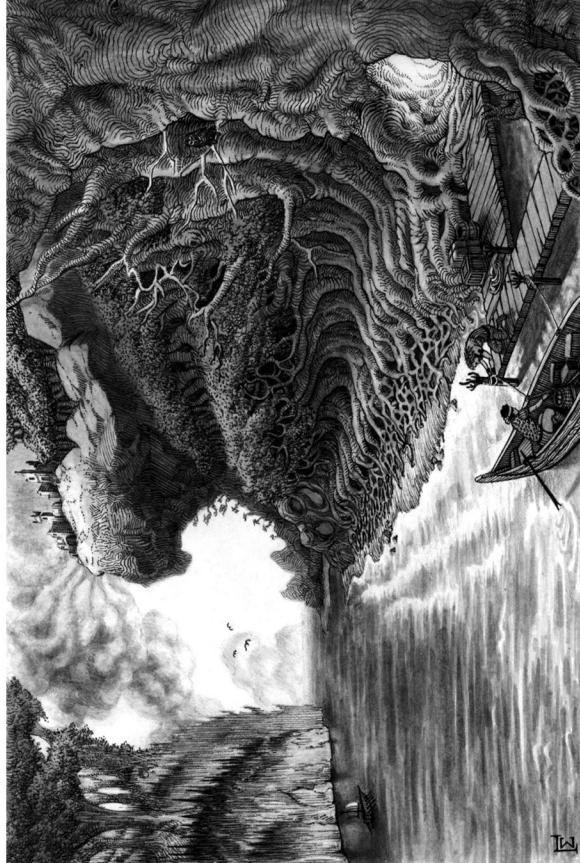
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On the other hand, there are a number of 2e site-based dungeon exploration modules available on eBay. The keep could be used as a base of operations while the PCs scour a nearby dungeon level by level. This is the route I took. The PCs fought their way through the Shattered Circle adventure by Bruce Cordell. While resting at the keep between forays, they slowly expanded their influence over the place.

At the very least, the keep could make for an interesting stopover during a journey to a more enticing location.

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ON POINT

Years from now I will look back on this issue with some fondness. The rough draft was written in a haze of pain and oxycodone as I recovered from varicoccele surgery. You can look it up on Wikipedia if you want.

To save you some time, though, allow me to summarize the surgery: A doctor cuts a hole in your abdomen, then slices out some varicose veins from your bean bag. There's swelling and pain. Oh dear God the swelling and the pain! As I lay on the couch, loopy from narcotics, I dusted off an article that matched my kooky mood. Behold, Freeman's Keep.

Freeman's Keep was the home of a brief, 8-10 session AD&D 2e campaign that I ran back in 2000. It was something of a freak fest, but that's what I was going for. I was living in San Bernardino at the time, which is a miserable pit of despair. The strangeness of the campaign mirrored the oddness of my real life surroundings. My friends would drive two hours to game with me, so I really enjoyed the time we spent together. Presenting Freeman's Keep in this issue is something of a tribute to my friends and the sacrifice they made by traveling so far to game.

This article also has an interesting connection to my former RPG zine, Scrollworks. I began Scrollworks around the same time that I started the Freeman's Keep game. Years later, the very last issue of Scrollworks included a rough version of the article in this issue. In a way, Scrollworks began and ended with this article.

In light of that, I have decided to finally put the Scrollworks zine to rest. While I have not been able to resurrect and revise all of the old material, I've preserved quite a bit. It's time to move on and to put that period of my life behind me

Until next time,
Christian

The Gnome Engineer

Silas Weatherstop (Thief 3/Illusionist2) was hired to see if there was any credence to the rumors that Freeman had hidden gold away in a secret vault under the keep. Being a rather typical gnome, Silas declared that if a vault existed, then he would certainly be able to find it. He spoke in a steady stream of techno-babble, going on and on about "the detection of certain anomalies while performing soundings of the bedrock." The adventurers had no idea what he was talking about so they left him alone to investigate. Silas began tunneling under the keep and no one has seen him since.

The tunnel that Silas dug is too narrow for a man to enter and certainly no one wishes to send in a child. A halfling could fit down the tunnel, but Sinchin has scared any away. The gnome is definitely alive because scraping and digging can be heard occasionally under people's floors. Just last week, someone saw a few cobblestones in the courtyard get pushed aside. The face of the dirty gnome appeared briefly, then disappeared like some two-legged prairie dog.

The inhabitants of the keep fear that Silas is digging a maze of tunnels beneath their feet that might cause buildings to collapse. People have tried calling into the tunnels, begging him to come out, but there has been no response.

Merrick has determined from tracks in the dirt around the tunnel entrance that Silas has been exiting at regular intervals. A guard was posted, but he fell asleep. A snare was set, but that was disabled. It was suggested that Sinchin go into the tunnel, but the leucrotta refused, citing a fear of the dark. For now, there just isn't much to be done and the story of the "Gnome Gopher of Freeman Keep" is beginning to spread, much to the embarrassment of the locals.

USING THE KEEP IN PLAY

In my own campaign, Freeman's Keep was located in the Forgotten Realms, however, it can just as easily be placed in any milieu. Good or neutral aligned characters will find their skills in high demand. For years the bandits who sallied forth from the keep kept beasties and other brigands at bay. The trend towards civility at Freeman's Keep has inadvertently created a power vacuum in the area. Monsters are starting to roam the area and bandits attracted by the renewed merchant traffic are causing problems. Lower level PCs might be able to develop their skills against highwaymen and small bands of humanoid.

FREEMAN'S KEEP

ad&d 2e



Freeman's Keep was constructed 25 years ago by Freeman Grewe, a man of low moral character and mixed lineage. Freeman's frame was truly massive and it was hinted that his mother was a half-ogress. He earned his fortune by preying upon the heavily laden merchant wagons that ply the road between Triboar and Longsaddle (see map).

Repeated attempts were made to end Freeman's predation, but the man (or half-man?) evaded all efforts. In time Freeman grew so confident that he began construction of a small keep to be used as a permanent base of operations. After the completion of the keep, officials from both Triboar and Longsaddle realized that they would not be able to get rid of Freeman and his henchmen without a tremendous expense in gold and lives.

With few appealing options remaining, the officials decided to co-opt the robber baron. They offered amnesty and the right to collect a "road tax" on all traffic that passed by the keep. Advancing in age, Freeman saw this as an excellent opportunity to retire from cutting down caravan guards and having his hide peppered with arrows. He accepted the offer and then settled down to a life of tax collecting and gluttony.

Freeman died five years later after choking to death on a chicken bone. Those years had not been kind to Freeman's waistline. Already large, he gained a tremendous amount of weight, so much in fact that his underlings decided not to bury him in a nearby copse of woods. Instead, they dragged his body out into the courtyard and interred him in a shallow grave. A simple headstone marked the grave. "Here lies Freeman Grewe, a foul tempered bastard."

For nearly two decades following Freeman's death, the ownership of the keep was in dispute. Initially, Freeman's underlings began slaughtering one another in a power struggle. Triboar and Longsaddle tried to garrison the keep, but they, too, met with failure. With banditry on the rise and beasts on the prowl, the keep was mostly abandoned, save for a few desperate souls.

At long last, a group of iron-willed adventurers settled the issue. The itinerant sell-swords were a mixed bag. They called themselves the

Stone Striders after successfully clearing an underground complex of nasty spider creatures who made the lair beneath some ancient standing stones.

They had a reputation for being skilled, albeit ruthless, fighters, so their questionable morals would have no doubt appealed to Freeman. The adventuring band consisted of two fighting men, a forester, and a rather vicious cutpurse. There was originally a fifth member, an elfen spellcaster, but he was assassinated. No one claimed responsibility, but the thief was an obvious suspect.

Within weeks of arriving at the keep, the Stone Striders killed many wandering monsters, ran off anyone who would not accept their rule and beat up a few surly holdouts as a lesson to the rest. The forester of the group retreated to the seclusion of the nearby woods, wanting nothing to do with the butchery. The rogue, of course, loved all the purging.

Next, the company began administering to the day to day affairs of the keep. They secured for themselves lucrative enterprises within the keep's walls, while hiring loyal retainers for others. Within a year the character of Freeman's Keep changed dramatically. Merchants no longer felt the need to take long detours around the place. A few farmers were attracted to the area's fertile soil and settled down, bringing with them their families and a sense of stability. The keep still retains some its rough characteristics, but the atmosphere has changed a great deal.

The four adventurers (Pike, Nestor, Pel, and Merrick), available services, a map of the keep, a few NPCs and additional information appear below.

THE KEEP

a) Main Gate

At first glance, the keep is not much to look at. The architecture is utilitarian in all respects. This suits the inhabitants just fine, because what Freeman's Keep lacks in aesthetics, it makes up for in security.

Visitors are always stopped at the gate, where they are asked a series of questions by Marina Buehl (Fighter 4). A long-time resident of the keep, Marina has acquired a serious demeanor and an ability to handle herself in a fight. The adventurers who tamed the keep respected those qualities, so they appointed her Captain of the keep's

domain of a disgusting group of ogres called, appropriately enough, trash ogres.

The trash ogres are typical of their species. They are large, hot-tempered, and dim-witted. What makes them unique is their shocking level of filth. Their bodies are covered with large, oozing sores. Huge chancres scar their mouths and their own fecal matter drips down their legs. Few can bear the sight of the plague-infested creatures, much less tolerate their stench.

The trash ogres have lurked in the area since before Freeman Grewe and his band of outlaws arrived. Outcasts from their own kind, the trash ogres inhabit a dark cave complex stuffed with the refuse they collect from the keep. For years no one knew how they came to be in this state until a visiting wizard was able to shed light on the subject.

The wizard had read about a clan of ogres from the Sword Mountains known for their ferocity and fanatical devotion to a deity with an insatiable thirst for blood. In his name, they battled others of their own kind and anyone else who crossed their path. They were eventually defeated in battle and cursed by their god for causing him shame. Because their god now considered them filth, the ogres were doomed to live in it. During the ensuing years, the trash ogres developed a tolerance for their wretched state and have grown remarkably patient.

What the wizard did not know was that the ogres were promised a second chance if they accepted their penance with quiet shame. After 35 years of suffering, their time of deliverance is nearly at hand. The ogres have had great and terrible dreams sent by their god, letting them know that soon they will rise up and slaughter the inhabitants of Freeman's Keep. Their stench and filth will be washed away with the blood of the humans. The ogres' trash collecting duties have now taken on a new urgency. With each trip to the keep, the ogres study the guards, their number, placement, and other defenses.

It's hard for the residents of the keep to calculate the exact number of ogres living in the caves, which are located just a few miles from the keep. Only a dozen or so have ever been seen at any given time. The caves are far too filthy to venture into and the ogres certainly aren't telling, since they rarely talk to outsiders. In fact, there are nearly 40 adults and 15 young tucked away in the refuse-strewn tunnels.

bleeding in disguise. Moments after being expelled, a band of determined halflings slaughtered his mother and her brood. Sinchin's mother had been plaguing a nearby halfling village, killing livestock and a few villagers. The villagers mobilized and struck when the mother was still weak after birthing her pups. Sinchin witnessed the slaughter from a distance, horrified.

The event had a profound effect on Sinchin. As a result of being abandoned, Sinchin craves attention. He has been able to suppress his evil nature in order to gain companionship. Merrick has taken a keen interest in Sinchin and spends a great deal of time training him to be obedient. The keep's populace has reluctantly accepted Sinchin, although most have no idea what a leucrotta is. They think he's a deformed, talking dog – perhaps the result of some wizard's bizarre breeding program.

Sadly, one aspect of Sinchin's instincts cannot be suppressed – his uncontrollable hatred of halflings. He will attack any halfling on sight unless restrained. When asked about his penchant for halflings, Sinchin merely wags his tail, perks up his ears and responds, "I like to eat halflings. I eat them up good."

Warning signs have been placed along the road advising halflings that they should detour around the keep. Fortunately for Sinchin, the powers that be (Pike, Nestor, Pel and Merrick) like Sinchin more than halflings, so they will always choose his side in a conflict. Sinchin is smart enough to distinguish dwarves, human children, and gnomes from halflings, although he will give anyone under 4' tall a thorough sniffing just to be sure.

When visitors to the keep first meet Sinchin, he will be lying in the dirt outside his doghouse, belly to the sun, tongue hanging out of his mouth. He responds well to scratching behind the ears and food. Sinchin does not exude evil, so an unprovoked attack on him will bring down the wrath of Merrick and his friends.

Sinchin: AC 4; Move 18"; Hit Dice 6+1; hp 13; #AT 1; dmg 3-18; Special Attacks: mimic speech; Special Defenses: Kick in retreat; AL N; Size M.

Trash Ogres

Like any community, the keep generates a large amount of refuse. Some of the trash can be given to animals for feed or be used to fertilize plants. What's left over must go somewhere. That somewhere is the

contingent of warriors.

Marina believes in solving problems before they have a chance to get worse. Therefore, she likes to personally oversee all traffic entering the keep. She is backed up by four other guards (Fighter 2) and a rather unusual leucrotta named Sinchin, who lives in a doghouse just outside the gate.

Visitors to the gate must pay a 2 sp entry duty. Wagons can enter the keep for a fee of 1 gp.

b) Guard Towers

These towers are used to access the battlements atop the walls. Each tower has three floors, as well as a roof that can be used for observation. None of the towers are equipped with siege engines. The towers are used to house the warriors hired by the adventurers to guard the keep. In all, there are 30 fighting men. Several of the warriors are family men and have been allowed to convert one or two floors of each tower into a dwelling. The single men bunk in any unused floors.

The guards are well-paid and loyal. A few of the older men have



Marina tends to an annoying visitor at the gate.

lived in the keep for many years. They enjoy the renaissance that has taken place and hope to retire there someday.

The guards man the walls and gates constantly. A small group of four patrols the grounds at night.

k) Pike's Tower

This tower overlooking the main gate was converted into a home by one of the adventurers who helped stabilize the keep. His name is Pike, an intimidating man partial to pole arms, such as halberds and glaives. If an adversary comes inside the reach of his pole arm, Pike is always ready with a short sword that he refers to as his "fillet knife."

While serving as a mercenary, Pike learned to capitalize on lucrative opportunities. Once it appeared that he and his fellow adventurers would be running things at the keep, Pike took control of the stable and the collection of duties at the gate. He carefully records the coins taken in and the turns the money over to the keep's coffers, minus a small commission of course. Pike owns the stable outright and keeps all of those profits for himself.

Finally, it should be noted that Pike and Marina Buehl are lovers. Because he is so fond of her, Pike takes a special interest in anyone who makes trouble at the gate.

Pike, 7th-level Fighter: AC 0 (*plate mail +1*, Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 56; THACO 13 (9 with *halberd +2*, Strength bonus, Weapon Specialization); #AT 2; Dmg 1d10+5 (*halberd +2*, Strength bonus, Weapon Specialization) or 1d6+2 (short sword, Strength bonus); AL N; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11. Pike has a *ring of free action* (conferring immunity to *web*, *slow* and *hold spells*) and a *potion of extra-healing*. He has 500 gp, 200 pp and two gems worth 1,000 gp each in a lock box.

d) Stable

Owned by Pike, the stable offers the usual services, such as boarding, grooming and shoeing. It costs 5 cp to stable a horse for one day. The stable hand is a withdrawn adolescent by the name of Owen. Owen is a neat freak. The stable is very clean and tidy and visitors are always impressed. Owen does not tolerate disorder and this extends to the property of his customers.

The young man has been known to empty and repack the contents of saddlebags in a more efficient manner. Owen will even go so far as

past, so he is careful not to condemn those who still engage in shady acts. He believes that if he is patient, then more and more citizens of the keep will be inspired by Lathander's teachings. Brother Samuel is generally well-regarded because of his kind, generous nature.

k) Inn

The keep's inn is an informal affair; it even lacks a proper name. The inn is a two-story building that can house up to 40 guests in 12 rooms. There is a rather cozy (although some would call it cramped) common area where hungry travelers can enjoy a meal and a pint before retiring. A night's stay (2 gp) includes an evening and morning meal. There are no private rooms so guests must share quarters.

The inn is a vital component of the keep's economy, since the profits help to pay the salaries of the garrison.

OTHER NPCs

Merrick

Merrick is the fourth member of the adventuring band that secured Freeman's Keep. He is ill at ease within the walls of the keep, so he built a cottage in the nearby woods. During his time in the forest, Merrick befriended a race of sentient squirrels called *kercpa*. He has also met an enchanting fellow ranger by the name of Talia. A member of the Harpers, Talia passes through the area from time to time. Merrick is enamored with the woman, as well as the organization she belongs to. He hopes to one day prove his worth and join their cause.

Merrick, 6th-level Ranger: AC 4 (leather armor +1, Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 35; THACO 15 (14 with *long sword +1*, 13 with bow or *dagger +2*); #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d8+2 (*long sword +1*, Strength bonus, 1d4+3 (*dagger +2*, Strength bonus) or 1d6 (composite longbow and flight arrows); SA attack with two weapons; SD ranger skills (see below); AL NG. Str 16, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 13. Ranger abilities: Tracking (16), Hide in Shadows (42%), Move Silently (52%). Merrick has a *potion of extra healing* and a *ring of feather falling*.

Sinchin

Sinchin is an unusual leucrotta. He never grew to full size after being cast out of the litter by his mother. Being a runt was actually a

knew Geoffrey during their days together as mercenaries, recommended him for the post. Geoffrey served as paymaster and earned a good reputation among the men. If he has a fault, it's that he often regrets living his life behind a desk, instead of out in the world. This makes him sad at times, but he never allows these feelings to detract from his work.

i) Pel's Tower

Pel has claimed this tower for his home and it is rumored to be heavily trapped. Pel receives frequent visitors from as far away as Wasterdeep. These visitors fuel rumors that Pel is involved in a rather extensive network of crime. Many believe that Pel is a worshipper of Mask, but this is untrue. In fact, the visitors are merely old partners in crime who simply need a quiet place to lay low after a heist. Pel harbors them so that he can stay apprised of news beyond the keep's wall. Pel is very loyal to Pike, Nestor and Merrick. He considers them brothers and will kill without hesitation anyone who threatens them without hesitation.

Pel, 9th-level Thief: AC 0 (*leather armor +3, boots of striding and springing*, Dexterity bonus); MV 12 + special (*boots*: can leap 30' forward, 9' back, or 15' straight up); hp 25; THAC0 16 (14 with *short sword +2*, 13 with *short bow +1*); # AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6+2 (*short sword +2*) or 1d6+1 (*short bow +1*); SA +4 to attack rolls and quadruple damage on backstab, can attack and leap away before counterattacked if wins initiative (2% chance of stumbling); AL N(e); Str 11, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 14. Thief skills: Pick Pockets (55%), Open Locks (65%), Find & Remove Traps (30%), Move Silently (70%), Hide in Shadows (85%), Hear Noise (45%), Climb Walls (90%), Read Languages (30%). Pel wears a *ring of invisibility*. In a pouch Pel has 50 gp and two exquisite rubies worth 2,000 gp each.

j) Chapel

As the number of families and permanent residents in Freeman's Keep have increased, so have the spiritual needs. Well, at least some folks feel that the keep could use some spiritual nourishment. Answering the call to serve is Brother Samuel (Cleric 2) of Lathander. He has high hopes of building a dynamic, supportive community.

Brother Samuel uses a small warehouse as a chapel. It's not much, but it's a start. Brother Samuel is keenly aware of the keep's turbulent

to balance the newly repacked saddle on a beam to ensure that each side is evenly weighted. If the saddle leans to one side, he will rearrange the contents until he is pleased. This behavior unnerves some, but to his credit, Owen has never stolen a single item. Customers are strongly urged by Pike to "just let Owen do his thing."

e) Inner Gate and Courtyard

Once past the inner gate, which is guarded at all times by two men, a visitor sees that Freeman's Keep might be better described as a fortified village or hamlet. The sturdy towers and walls provide an excellent defense, but the spirit of the place is captured in and among the buildings of the courtyard. In this space, nearly 200 residents go about their daily business. At any given time there are 4d20 visitors who can also be found here.

f) Brothel

This house of ill repute does not have a provocative name, a cosmopolitan madame nor any diamonds in the rough. The women here are shameless, bawdy slatterns with enough emotional baggage to cripple a pack mule. Freeman's Keep can be a rather dull place for young, single men, so carnal pleasure is a popular pastime.

As Freeman's Keep has stabilized, more respectable people have settled within the walls. These civic-minded individuals have suggested that it might be time to close the place down. This has met with stiff resistance from the owner, Nestor of the Axe. Nestor was one of the adventurers who tamed the keep and he took a keen interest in the brothel as soon as he walked through the front gate.

Nestor is a broad shouldered, tall man with a drooping mustache and an ever-present smile. He enjoys a good fight and a strong drink. Nestor keeps a tight reign on the girls who work for him and quickly handles rowdy customers. Should anyone get out of hand, they are invited to kiss the blade of his battle-axe.

Nestor, 7th-level Fighter: AC 1 (*chain mail +2, shield +1, +4 vs missiles*, Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 60; THAC0 13 (9 with *battle axe +2*, Strength bonus, Weapon Specialization); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+5 (*battle axe +2*, Strength bonus, Weapon Specialization); AL N; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 13. Nestor has a *rope of climbing* and a *potion of extra-healing*. He has 200 gp, 100 pp and 3 gems worth 1,000 gp each in a lock box.

g) The Ogre

Named with Freeman Grewe in mind, the Ogre is a tavern where wine, ale, and beer flow freely. Since the keep has calmed measurably, an increasing number of merchants and travelers stop over. When they do, the Ogre is a decent place to find a drink. The atmosphere can get a bit rowdy at times, but the tavern's unassuming owner is often pre-sent to settle disputes.

Pel the Rogue, the third member of the adventuring band, owns the tavern. Pel must work very hard to keep his temper under control. Even an angry exchange of insults can lead to a knifing. Pel watches all travelers closely, attempting to divine their true nature. The keep is quite a prize and there are those who would try to wrest it from the four adventuring companions. Pel is always on the lookout for any spies or rival adventurers. Because he rarely draws attention to himself, Pel is able to surprise those who are visiting the keep for the sole purpose of causing problems.

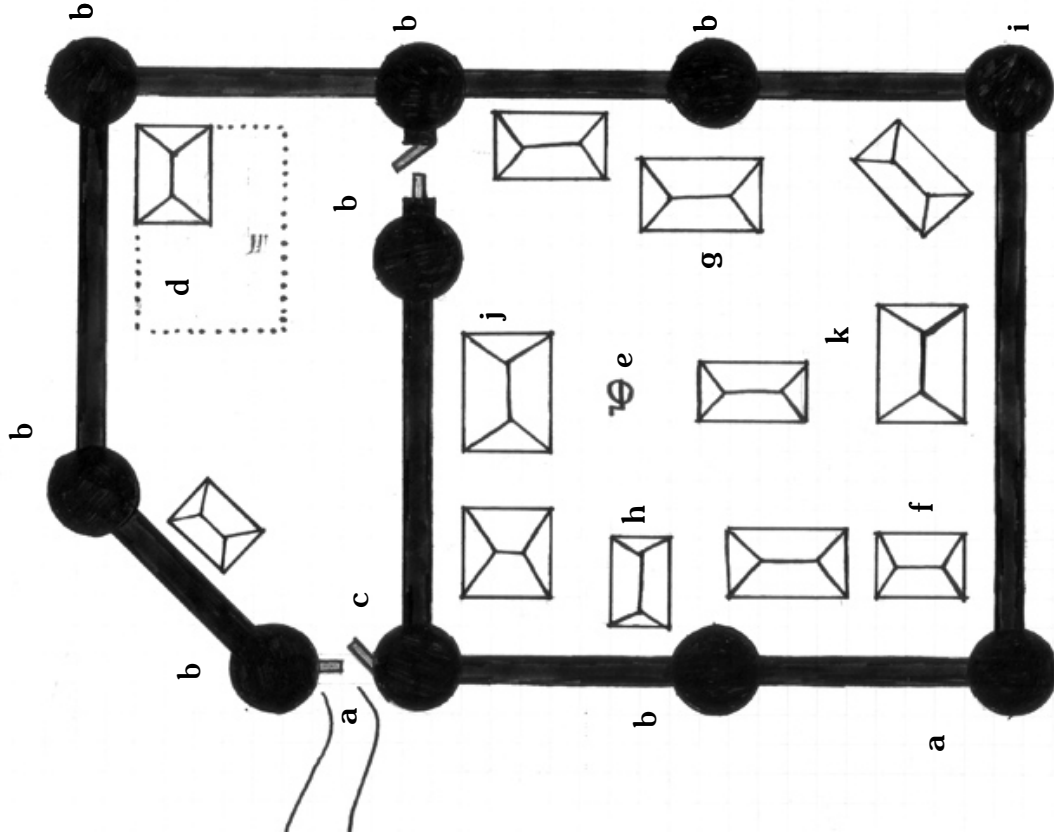
In addition to Pel, visitors might meet Gage (Fighter 3), the rather bitter second in command of the garrison at the keep. He resents playing second fiddle to Marina Buehl. He believes that if she were not Pike's lover, then he'd be in command. What Gage refuses to accept is the fact that Marina shows a lot more promise as a warrior. She would mostly likely beat him down in a fight. Anyone who buys Gage a few pints will be told the keep's long and colorful past. The man likes to talk, so a few more pints will reveal his bitterness. Anyone looking to undermine the keep might gain a foothold by exploiting Gage.

Twice a month, the Ogre is closed for a few hours during the day while Pike, Nestor, Pel, and Merrick (the fourth and final member of the band) discuss the keep's business. These meetings are the only time Merrick will be seen inside the keep's walls, since he prefers the solitude of his cabin in the nearby woods.

h) Trade Office

Freeman's Keep has a trade office to facilitate commerce. It was built by Pike and dedicated to the goddess Waukeen. Guards can inquire about work, caravan masters can trade news regarding road conditions, and goods can be exchanged. Local farmers, drovers, merchants and guards can be found here throughout the day. The office charges a small commission on all contracts that are forged within the keep.

An honest man named Geoffrey Kent manages the office. Pike, who



Iridia

Number 84
January 12, 2008

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

CONTACT

gurps 4e

You met Veronica through craigslist. Maybe you were lonely one night and decided to check out the casual encounters personals.

You read her ad, were intrigued, then sent her a note. You exchanged e-mails and met for drinks a few days later. One drink led to four and within a few hours you found yourselves in a hotel room. Veronica lacks inhibitions, so the evening was wild and memorable.

While Veronica may not be what you are looking for in a girlfriend, she is fun and very easy to talk to. Veronica likes to have a good time and as long as you don't judge her for her lust for life, she is a loyal friend. You've remained close and get together once in a while. As a perk, she is a supervisor at the DMV, which has proved to be just as beneficial as the sex.

Veronica has no problem hunting down names and addresses for you, but don't ask for favors too often. It also doesn't hurt if you take her out for sushi now and again!

Using Monica In Play

Veronica can be purchased as a Contact. The skill she can provide for the PC is Professional Skill (DMV employee), with an effective level of 15. She is available quite often and is completely reliable. She is worth 12 points as a Contact. Here is the formal GURPS format:

Contact (professional skill (DMV employee)-15, quite often, completely reliable) [12]



Iridia
c/o Christian Walker
9903 Santa Monica Blvd #245
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

www.IridiaZine.net

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Editing by Ray Brooks



Lonely in Venice. Cute, fun-loving Latina seeks handsome, intelligent man for dinner, drinks and conversation. Let's see where it goes from there. Must be unmarried and D/D free. Your pic gets you mine.

Veronica Fuentes (49 points)

SM 0 (5' 5" tall, 120 lbs.);
ST 9 [-10], DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10;
HP 10, Will 10, Per 12 [10], FP 10;
Basic Lift 16, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d-1;
Basic Speed 4.75, Basic Move 4;
Dodge 7, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Alcohol Tolerance [1], Beautiful [12], English (native) [6], Fearlessness 2 [4], Honest Face [1], Less Sleep 2 [4], Security Clearance [5], Spanish (native) [0].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Compulsive Carousing (6) [-10], Wealth (struggling) [-10].

Skills

Driving-12 [8], Erotic Art-12 [8], Professional Skill (DMV employee)-15 [20].

Attacks

Punch-10, 1d-3 cr, Reach C, Parry 8.

Equipment

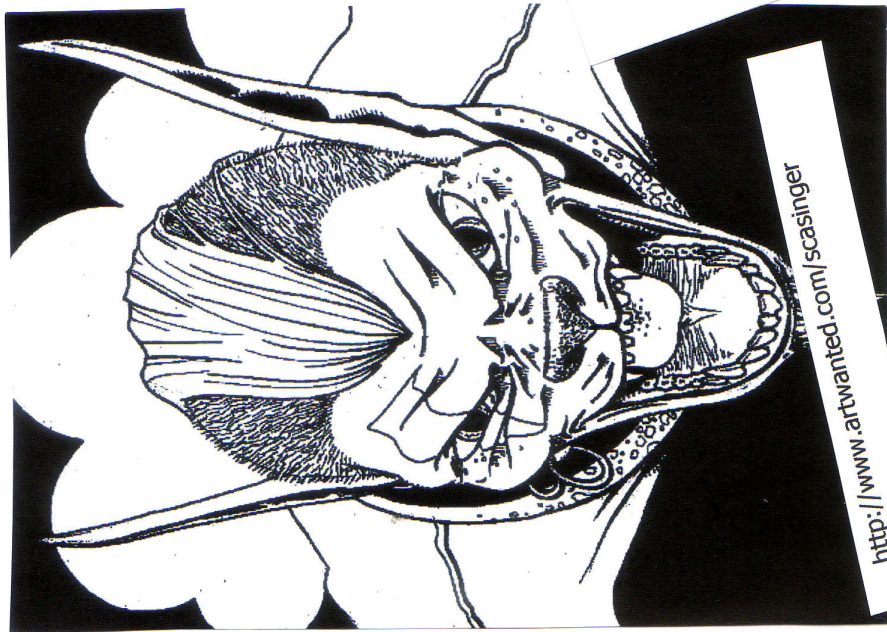
Tokidoki purse by Le Sportsac, 2004 Jeep Liberty, MacBook, \$80.

\$1

Number 85

Iridia

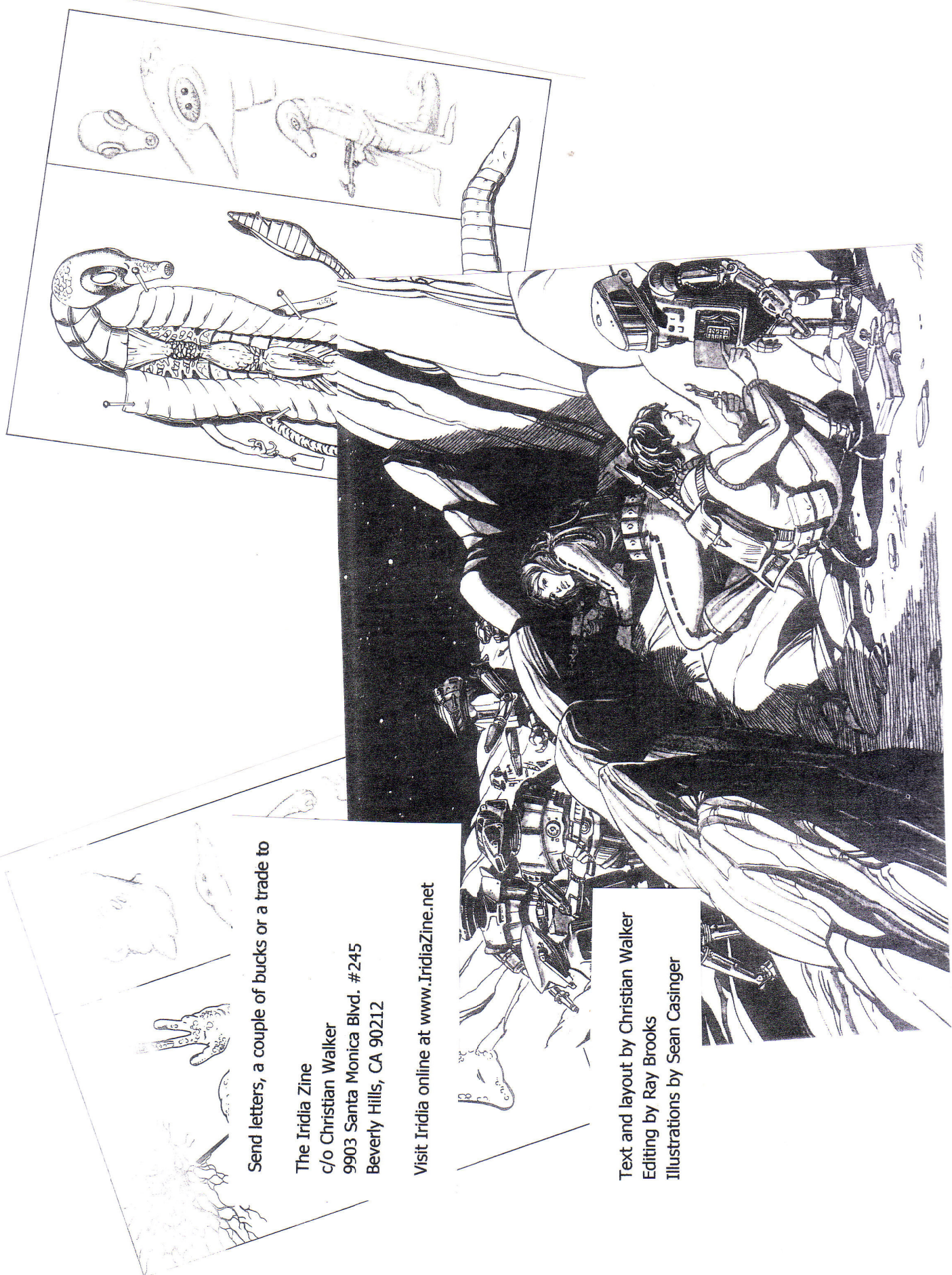
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At The Bar

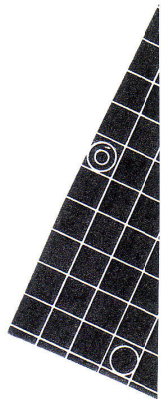
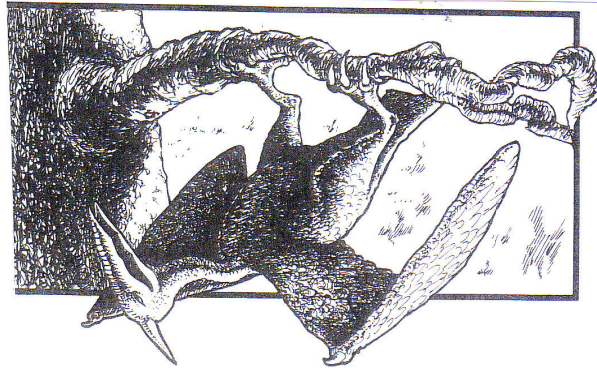
That evening Gavin, GB, myself and Efraim were draining pints in a bar. We had come under fire, survived, arrested the bad guys and seized a dangerous cargo. Life was good. Or at least I thought it was.

I stood up to make a toast. As I did so, I made eye contact with a man in the corner. He eyed me coldly, then slowly raised his hand and drew it across his neck in a slashing motion. He then got up and walked out. I was stunned.

That shipment of guns was paid for by *someone*. They were being delivered to *someone*. *Someone* would be angry over their interception. *Someone*...

And who led the charge, who seized all the glory for themselves? Me.

Someone was now looking for me for payback and suddenly that promotion didn't seem so desirable after all.



On Point

Maybe it was 1986? Yeah, had to be. My friend Todd and I would hang out in his room and play games like Thieves' Guild, Basic D&D, and Star Frontiers. I have fond memories of them all, but Star Frontiers is what I want to focus on in this issue.

We played a brief solo campaign that cast my character in the role of a starport security officer. It was his job to inspect arriving vessels. He made sure they weren't transporting contraband, he reviewed the crew list to see if there were any outstanding warrants, and when applicable, searched passengers' luggage for illicit goods. On the surface, it sounds rather dull, but we were 15 and hormonal. You can bet that lots of sex, gunfire, and explosions were inevitable. If working for the TSA at LAX was anything like our Star Frontiers game, I'd quit my job in a heartbeat and sign up.

Aiding us during play were the maps from the Knight Hawks boxed set. Knight Hawks was a Star Frontiers expansion that introduced rules for space ship construction and battles. I particularly enjoyed the 8.5" x 17" freighter maps. I used to study them intently, imagining what each room looked like and what it would be like to travel among the stars.

For this issue, I'd like to share a simple search and seizure my character accomplished. Many of the details escape me, so apologies for filling in the blanks. I'm sure that Todd, my former GM and a reader of this zine, won't mind the creative license. If you ever run a Star Frontiers campaign of your own, perhaps the mission notes may be of use to you.



THE DIOMEDES

star frontiers

Mission Brief

The session would have begun with a mission brief from a higher-ranking officer. It might have gone something like this:

"Long-range sensors have detected the light freighter Diomedes. The latest update from Star Law states that it is registered to Cassidine Salvage, Inc. and captained by Wallace Laner, a human also of Cassidine. Captain Laner has been incarcerated for smuggling in the past, so the Diomedes is certainly a red-flag vessel.

When it arrives at the starport for resupply, four officers will board the vessel, search the crew quarters, review the cargo manifest and make a determination if the Diomedes' cargo should be impounded for a thorough search."

En Route

In our original game, myself and three other star port officers (NPCs run by the GM) approached the vessel in a small shuttlecraft. (Piloting the shuttlecraft might require the Computer skill, perhaps at level 3.) The ships that visited the port didn't actually dock at the spaceport. Instead, tugs, shuttles, or tenders ferried people and goods between the spaceport and visiting ships.

As we approached the Diomedes, we announced our intention to board via radio. We worried that we would be blasted by the ships'

weapons (if it had any). Instead, a gruff voice responded over the comm that we could dock at the Diomedes' airlock.



Book 'em, GB

I exited the cargo hold and rejoined my fellow officers. The smirk on my face told Captain Laner that an illicit cargo had been found. He would soon be in Star Law custody and perhaps that promotion I was dreaming of would become reality.



TRANSMISSIONS FROM PIPER

Sometimes you must look to the past, to see the future.

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The Cargo Hold

The next area to check was the cargo hold. It was only accessible via a narrow hallway. The passageway was pressurized, but not the cargo hold. A vac suit would be necessary. I thought about asking for a volunteer, but decided to do it myself. Showing initiative would eventually result in a promotion. Once that happened, I could order others to do this kind of thing. Until that day, I had to get in the suit and hope that a combat wasn't prowling the Diomedes' cargo hold.

I used one of the vac suits belonging to the crew, made my way to the cargo hold hatch and popped it open. I always found the sound of atmosphere being drawn into a vacuum unnerving. It sounded to me like some great beast was inhaling.

I turned on the cargo hold's light and noted several dozen containers, some 2 meters long and 1 meter in height and width. They were all bolted to the sides of the cylindrical cargo hold. I drifted out into the center of the hold and hung suspended in space, just trying to get a visual. Nothing looked out of order, but of course I'd need to crack the lids on a few of the containers to see what was within. The ship's

manifest said that the crates were robot and computer components destined for recycling or refurbishment.

With my luck, I'd crack open a container and have it be booby-trapped. I thought about letting some other slob take the risk, but that promotion rolled around my mind. What the hell. I began checking containers.

Container 1: robotic arms.

Container 2: CPUs. *yawn*

Container 3: CPU cooling fans. *bor-ing!*

Container 4: Jackpot! Among the robotic hands were at least a dozen laser pistols. Those were not on the manifest and were certainly stolen.



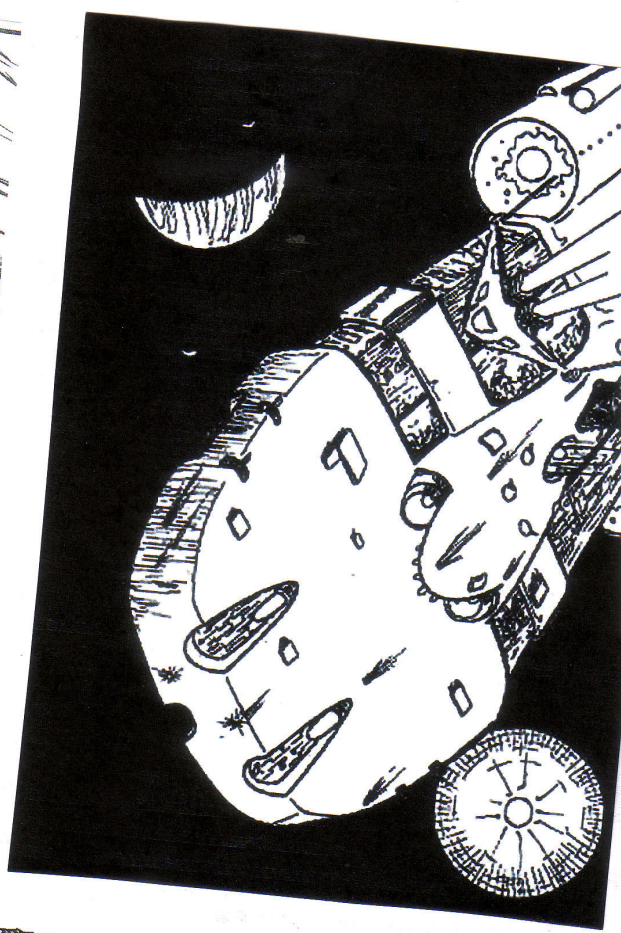
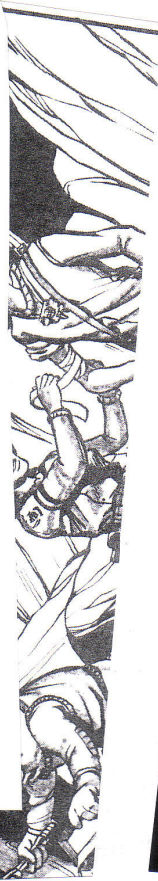
Our boarding party consisted of:

My character, Bernard Blazer, a human with a passion for detective novels.

Gavin Light, a human parolee who served time on the Dralasite homeworld.

Efraim Moab, a human medic who was constantly washing his hands.

Grandig Brandig, a Yazirian who said very little. He wasn't surly or anything, just quiet.



En route to the Diomedes

The Airlock

Our party entered the freighter through the ship's airlock. To our right was a passage leading to the escape pod. We would have to search the escape pod, to see if it was being used for smuggling.

Greeting us was Captain Wallace Laner, a short, bull of a man with a bald head and beard. He looked tough and the laser pistol at his side did nothing to ease the tension. Behind him, a scarred and surly-looking Yazirian stepped into the ship's elevator and closed the door.



My character spoke first. "Where's he going?"

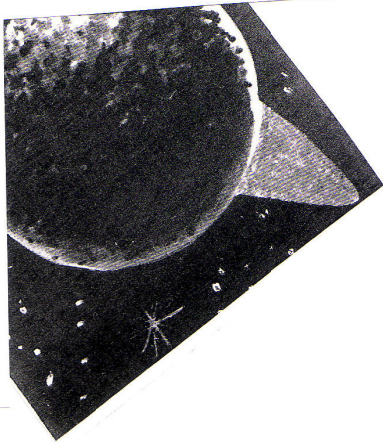
"Oh, that's my first officer. He's just making sure that our manifest is in order." Captain Wallace spoke those words with a smirk, so I certainly wasn't buying what he was selling.

"Listen, Captain, assemble your crew on this deck so we can begin our search. And while you're at it, hand over your sidearm until the search is concluded." I was losing my patience and worried that an ambush was being set below.

"I'll call my crew, but it's up to them if they want to roll out. As for my pistol, I am perfectly within my rights to carry a weapon on my own ship."

Grandig Brandig, who normally said very little, spoke next. We were all rather surprised. "Hand over the pistol, Captain, or I'll rattle your cage!" Grandig had raised his sonic stunner pointed it at Captain Laner.

Narrowing his hate-filled eyes, Captain Laner complied. He ordered his crew to muster on the deck. The eight crewmen dutifully appeared, save for the Yazirian first officer.



The Escape Pod

When Gavin and I rejoined Efraim and Grandig Brandig, we were amused to see that the captain and crewmen were all face down, their hands and ankles locked together with zip ties. Grandig Brandig, who was full of surprises today, was brandishing an autopistol at the subdued crewmen. Autopistols were not allowed during ship boardings, since their rounds might pierce a vessel's hull, but we weren't complaining. The lethality of the weapon pacified the crew, so no worries.

I walked up to Captain Laner, kicked him in the side of the head, then said, "Checking the cargo my ass. Just for that, you and your entire crew are under arrest. Your ship and cargo will be impounded."

Captain Laner began to speak, but I cut him off. "Save your shift. If you open your mouth again, GB here will ventilate you."

Already on edge, we proceeded to check the escape pod. Gavin and I tossed in two more tanglers, then fired our stunners into the darkness. When we heard nothing, we looked inside with a flashlight. Other than a mess, everything looked in order. We sealed the hatch and decided that a sweeper team could check it out later.



The First Officer

When Gavin and I stepped onto the engineering deck, we immediately drew fire. That damned Yazirian was doing more than

checking the ship's manifest. Laser fire zipped at us through the darkness. (He had apparently turned out the lights, too.)

Gavin fired his stunner into the darkness to no effect. I dove for cover and prayed there weren't others in hiding.

The Yazirian kept up his barrage. He wasn't a very good shot, which was good for us. Not only did we avoid being hit, but the laser fire revealed his position.

Gavin and I looked at one another, smirked, put away our stunners and pulled out tangle grenades. We lobbed them in the Yazirian's direction and waited for them to detonate. When they did, the Yazirian's enraged howls let us know that he was good and stuck. With no one else around to write a complaint or protest our actions, we beat the hell out of him.

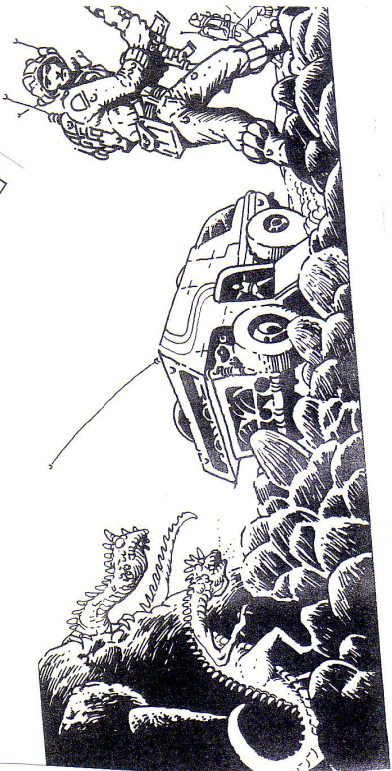
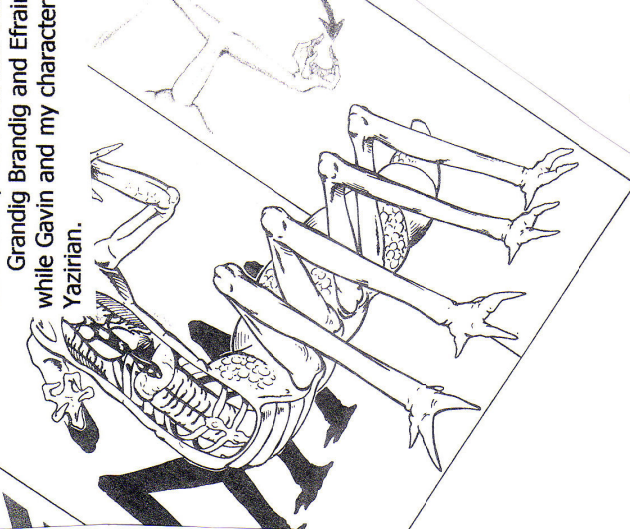
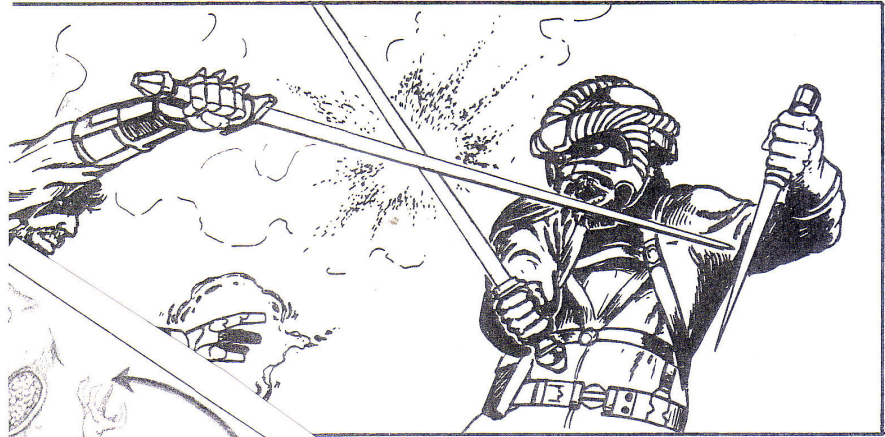
"Stop resisting!" *punch*

"Stop fighting!" *kick*

The Search

We began searching the crew quarters and reviewing the crew manifest. Several citations were handed out for minor offences, such as possession of drugs. We found some rather revolting pornography, but nothing illegal. The crew checked out as well. Several had prior convictions, but none had outstanding warrants.

Grandig Brandig and Efraim the medic were left to watch the crew while Gavin and my character, Bernard, went below decks to look for the Yazirian.

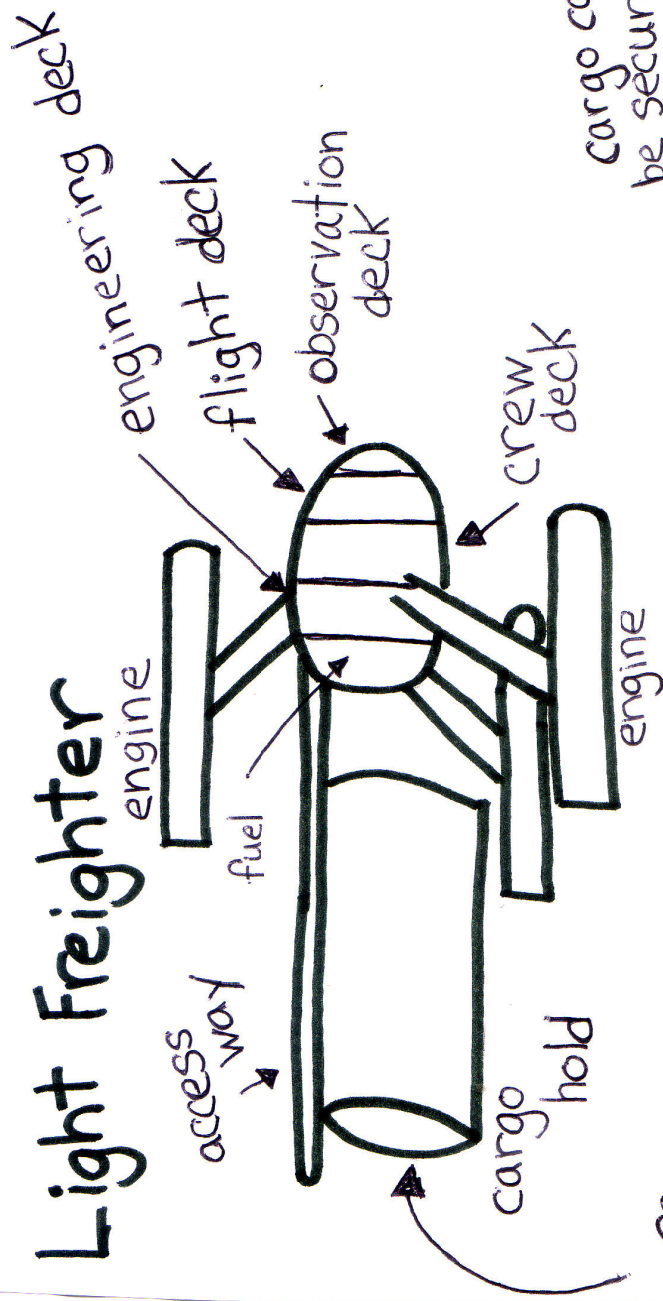


Robcomkit. The robcomkit is another highly specialized assortment of tools. It weighs only 15 kg and, like the techkit, is designed to be carried in a backpack. A robcomkit contains:

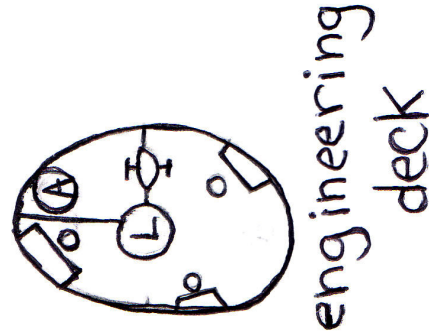
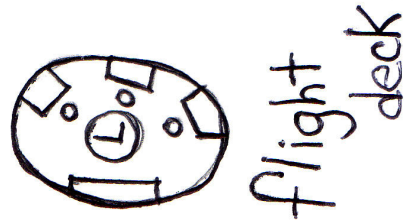
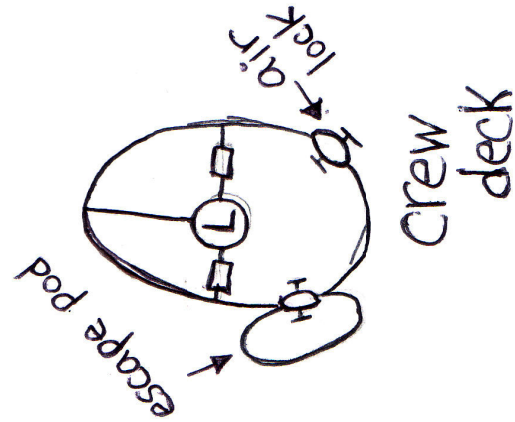
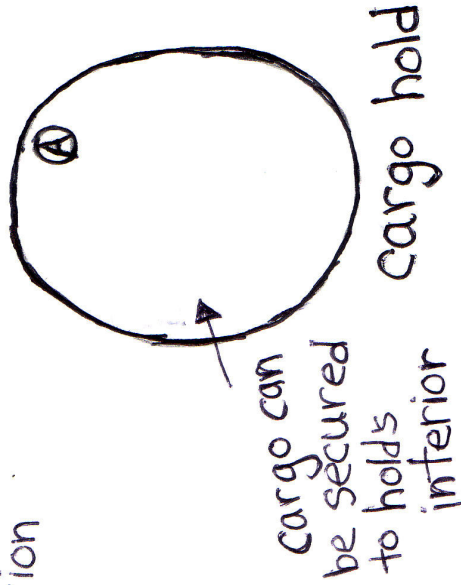
- Electrodriver, ion bonding tape, insulated wire, spray lubricant, techkit.
- Soldering iron — pen-sized laser soldering iron
- Solder — 1-meter roll of conductive soft metal
- Magnetic by-pass clips — 10 small connectors used to short-circuit wiring
- Breadboard circuits — 5 standard boards for mounting robot circuitry
- Demagnetizer — electrical tool to demagnetize fouled circuits
- Spray cleaner — spray solvent to remove dirt from the robot's works; 10 applications
- Miniature flashlight — 20 hours of light; magnetized handle
- Calipers — capable of taking measurements as small as .001 mm
- Needlenose pliers — similar to 20th century tool
- Sonic Scalpel — tool for cutting plastic, metal or flesh; makes a smooth, bloodless incision up to 5 mm deep
- Components — box of transistors, diodes and computer chips for robot circuits
- Oscilloscope — miniaturized viewer which displays information on electrical flow and other aspects of circuitry

Light Freighter

Ⓛ = lift
Ⓐ = hatch to access way



cargo is loaded and unloaded via a large rear hatch





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January 26, 2009

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Text and layout by Christian Walker
Editing by Ray Brooks

Crewmen

human males

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 45/45

Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 50/50

Intuition/Logic: 50/55

Personality/Leadership: 45/45

Initiative Modifier: +5

Skills (Technological PSA)

Computer-3

Melee Weapons-1

Technician-3

Weapons

Vibro Knife: % chance to hit: 30, Dmg 2d10, SEU Use: 1/
hit, Power: 20 SEU clip

Equipment

Chronocom, robcomkit, techkit.

Bio

The five crewmen were hired by Captain Laner and know nothing of the illicit cargo. They were promised good money if they simply did their job and didn't tell anyone who they were working for, nor where they were headed. While a few crewmen have misgivings about the arrangement, good money is good money. They will not offer resistance unless they are unlawfully brutalized.



Since they don't really play a major role in this story, you might as well use Ugnaught Techs from The Force Unleashed set. You can get up to four for \$1.

On Point

I've had the opportunity to play in a game of Werewolf the Apocalypse. Assuming the role of a player instead of GM has been very enjoyable. It's definitely taking some getting used to, though. As GM, I became used to being the center of attention. Since I was leading play, all eyes were upon me. Now that I'm a player, I have to accept sharing the spotlight. I'm learning to sit back and be part of a group. It's like going from being an only child as GM to having several siblings as a PC.

The new perspective has allowed me to reflect upon my GMing, to see what I've been doing right and wrong. While I could go on for several pages, my attention span is rather short. I'm not sure I could sit down and enumerate nor elaborate upon everything I've been thinking about. However, I have assembled a brief list.

Treasure

In the future I need to attend more to treasure. I do a fine job of making sure that the spell-casters find scrolls with the spells they need, that the warriors acquire certain weapons and armor, etc. What I want to get better at, however, is describing the non-magical stuff.

If the PCs find 250 gp in an ogre's lair, I want to take the time to describe the vessel that holds it. Perhaps the coins are stored in a small, hand-carved box depicting faeries and woodland nymphs? Where did the box come from? Who made it? The container, while not having a value itself, would still be noteworthy. Maybe instead of finding coins, the PCs discover a single, valuable item, like a piece of jewelry. The item will have a provenance and description that really makes it stand out.

Campaign Log

Life is complicated. It's demanding and often confusing. It's easy to forget what happened in the last session, including experience points and treasure earned. To help with all of that, I think it's great for the GM to maintain a campaign log. A great way to do this is to start a game blog through Google's blogspot. You can post pictures, make comments, subscribe to the RSS feed, etc. More importantly, when the game has ended and years have passed, it's a great way to look back on good times. I'm glad that I've written and maintained logs and will continue to do so despite the time and effort required.

Rules Light

I just can't do complex games any more. If the entire

game – monsters, char creation, combat rules, etc – doesn't fit in one book, I struggle. I need things to be quick and easy. I think this is important because of inclusion.

If I spend less time in the rulebook, it means I have more opportunities to give the PCs face-time. Also, if each character's combat action is resolved more quickly, then people can participate more often. I don't see how there's any downside to that.

Out: D&D in any of its modern forms (3x, 4e)

In: Labyrinth Lord, or a 0e/1e retro clone

Audio, Visual, Tactile, Kinesthetic

People learn best when you can engage them in multiple learning styles. Gaming should take into account the simple tools that teachers use. I think games should have an audio, visual, tactile and kinesthetic element to them. To this end, there should be dice, minis, terrain, discussion and maybe even some light music going on at a table. Stimulate peoples' senses and they are more likely to engage and remember the session. Personally, I love minis and game mats. I like to move my "guy" around the table and roll dice as he smashes stuff.

I will continue to utilize minis and terrain. I know some people feel that it's too much like a wargame, but it's my preference.

Speaking of minis, the *I dream in 25mm.* column returns! In this issue I also continue with last week's Star Frontiers material. I figured that it'd be fun to write up stat blocks for all of the characters from the narrative. Perhaps they may even come in handy if I ever get another chance to run a Star Frontiers game.

Finally, I wanted to say thanks to James Hargrove and Matt Borselli. In different message boards, both readers have jumped in to discuss the merits and challenges of zine publishing with would-be writers. We've all agreed that long, mish-mash e-zines with random content from multiple authors is not the best way to go. If a collaborative approach is what you're after, perhaps an APA or a tightly focused print rag like Fight On! is the way to go.

When in doubt, keep it small, keep it personal and maintain a regular publishing schedule. While zines (at least rpg zines) have been in a steady decline for a long time, they are still worth doing. Just put yourself and your gaming experiences into your pages and you can't go wrong.

Until next time,
Christian

Kashkin Rhaz

yazirian male

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 40/40

Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 50/50

Intuition/Logic: 55/50

Personality/Leadership: 40/40

Initiative Modifier: +5

Skills (Military PSA)

Beam Weapons-2

Computer-1

Gyrojet Weapons-1

Weapons

Laser Pistol: % chance to hit: 45, Dmg: 1d10 per SEU, SEU: 1-10, Rate: 2, Ammo: 20 SEU clip

Special Abilities

Battle Rage: 5 (5% chance of going berserk)

Gliding

Equipment

Laser pistol, 2 x 20 SEU clips

Bio

As Captain Laner suspected, Kashkin Rhaz was sent along to ensure the safe passage of the cargo. His employer, Cassidine Salvage, Inc., is a front company for a dangerous criminal organization. Kashkin is wanted in several systems and faces life sentences for his numerous, violent crimes. Rather than go to prison, Kashkin would rather go down fighting.



Another option for a yazirian might be the Gotal Mercenary. It only costs a buck.

The Smugglers

Captain Wallace Laner

human male

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 50/50

Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 50/50

Intuition/Logic: 55/50

Personality/Leadership: 45/45

Initiative Modifier: +5

Skills (Technological PSA)

Computer-2

Projectile Weapon-3

Robotics-1

Technician-3

Weapons

Automatic Pistol: % chance to hit: 60, Dmg 1d10/5d10,

Rate: 3(1), Ammo: 20 rounds

Equipment

Chronocom, automatic pistol, civilian skeinsuit

Bio

Captain Laner was contracted by Cassidine Salvage, Inc. to assemble a crew and pilot the Diomedes from the Cassidine system to the Theseus system. While Laner had his suspicions about the legality of his cargo, he chose not to ask questions. Included in the deal was the requirement that he accept a "first officer." The first officer was a surly yazirian named Kashkin Rhaz. Laner figured that the yazirian was simply there to watch over the cargo. Laner will cling to his innocence and explain that for once in his long criminal career, he is the victim.



Calo Nord is a \$4 Rare from the Bounty Hunters expansion.

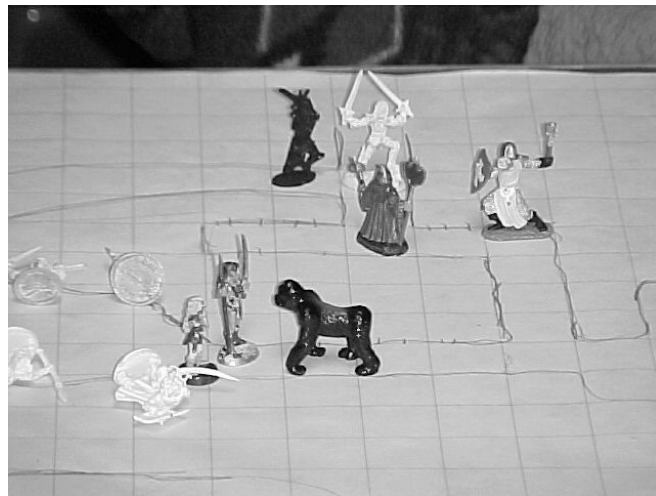
I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Because it gave me Gary Gygax, Erol Otus, Moldvay Basic D&D, Star Frontiers and AD&D, TSR was/is my favorite game company of all time. Wizards of the Coast is no slouch, however. WotC has done something for my gaming that no other company has: they gave me affordable, decent-looking minis for damn near every beastie in the game.

While looking through some old gaming photos, I came across a rather crude battle scene. A plastic ape was menacing a half-painted warrior. What the hell was that? When have I ever seen a monkey knife fight in a game session? Then it all came back to me. We weren't fighting an ape; we were locked in mortal combat with a four-armed killer primate—the dreaded Girallon.

In the battle shown in the photo, our party's spiked chain fighter, Manu, would eventually be ripped limb from limb. Feeling a bit nostalgic, I went looking for Girallon minis online and was pleased to see that WotC had released a really nice fig. Actually, WotC had released two versions of the Girallon.



Half-painted pewter minis and zoo animals populated our battle maps back in the day.

The first Girallon was released as a Rare from the Demonweb expansion. It costs about \$5.00 on EBay and is an absolute lump of crap. It looks like a melted marshmallow with an ape attached. Lame.

WotC made another attempt at the Girallon with a Fiendish version from the War Drums expansion. I think they did a great job. The mini is well-painted, has an awesome stance and looks like he's ready for damage. Best of all, the mini is priced at around \$2 on EBay. For less money, you get more badass.

I didn't realize the Girallon was a Large creature, so I ordered six from EBay seller Avengersrule2002. (Flawless transaction! Great seller!) I had thought about using them as albino apes. When they arrived, however, I realized that plan just wouldn't work. These figures are really big. I'll probably give five away and save one. Not only does the Girallon work as a mini to represent, well, itself, but it has other uses.

I'm convinced there's a way to combine the Fiendish Girallon with the Ewok miniature from the Rebel Storm expansion for the SW minis game. In a D&D game, the Ewok figs could represent a peaceful, forest-dwelling race that is plagued by the crazed Girallon. Or, the Girallon could be used in a Star Wars game. It could simulate an Endor native that is ripping the stuffing out of the Ewoks. The lovable Ewoks, of course, need the PCs to help them.

I haven't figured it all out yet, but it could be pretty cool.



He's angry because he's so ugly.



Big improvement!



Jub jub!

Grandig Brandig

yazirian male

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 40/50

Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 60/60

Intuition/Logic: 40/40

Personality/Leadership: 35/35

Initiative Modifier: +6

Skills (Military PSA)

Beam Weapons-2

Martial Arts-2

Projectile Weapons-1

Thrown Weapons-1

Weapons

Hand-to-Hand: % to hit: 50, Dmg: 4

Sonic Stunner: % to hit: 50, Dmg: stun

Tangler Grenade: % to hit: 40, Dmg: entanglement

Special Abilities

Battle Rage: 10 (10% chance of going berserk)

Gliding

Equipment

Chronocom, sonic stunner, tangler grenade, military skein-suit

Bio

Grandig Brandig hails from the yazirian world of Yast. He left after his clan fell out of favor with the ruling family. He has claimed said clan as his life enemy and is quietly biding his time. Grandig Brandig hopes to gain combat skills and experience that will allow him to restore his family's honor.



The Bothan Noble from the Legacy of the Force expansion makes a reasonable yazirian. It's affordable at \$1.

Efraim Moab

human male

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 45/45

Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 45/45

Intuition/Logic: 55/60

Personality/Leadership: 50/50

Initiative Modifier: +5

Skills (Biosocial PSA)

Beam Weapons-1

Medical Skill-3

Weapons

Sonic Stunner: % to hit: 35, Dmg: stun

Equipment

Chronocom, sonic stunner, medkit, military skeinsuit

Bio

Efraim is from Kdikit, where he attended medical school.

Efraim left the university before earning the title of Doctor.

It's rumored that stress caused a nervous breakdown. He is a nervous, twitchy man, but makes up for his personality quirks by being an excellent medic.



The Imperial Security Officer from the Legacy of the Force expansion makes a great Efraim. He's very cheap at \$1.

The Diomedes, cont.

star frontiers

In last week's issue, I shared the story of an adventure I played in many years ago. When I sent the copies out in the mail, the issue felt a little incomplete. I realized that stat blocks and bios of the characters in the story might have been a nice touch. To make up for the oversight, I present them on the following pages.

The Star Frontiers box set came with a few dozen cardboard counters that could be used to facilitate combat. I still have my unpunched counters, but I generally prefer a 3D gaming experience. A line of metal miniatures was produced for Star Frontiers many years ago and are still available on EBay. I was never any good at painting, so they were never used in our games.

Fortunately, Wizards of the Coast manufactures pre-painted plastic minis for the Star Wars game. Quite a few of them would be perfect for Star Frontiers. After each NPC bio I have suggested a Star Wars mini and average purchase price on EBay.

The Starport Officers

Bernard Blazer

human male

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 45/45
Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 50/50
Intuition/Logic: 50/45
Personality/Leadership: 50/50
Initiative Modifier: +5

Skills (Military PSA)

Beam Weapons-2
Computer-1
Martial Arts-1
Thrown Weapons-1

Weapons

Hand-to-Hand: % to hit: 35, Dmg: 4
Sonic Stunner: % to hit: 45, Dmg: stun
Tangler Grenade: % to hit: 35, Dmg: entanglement

Equipment

Chronocom, sonic stunner, tangler grenade, military skein-suit

Bio

Bernard is a little over-confident. While this does help him to stay calm in stressful situations, it also lends itself to cockiness and poor judgment. Perhaps in time, wisdom and experience will temper his bravado. Bernard was born on Gollywog, the planet around which the starport from this story orbits.



General Veers is a Rare from the Rebel Storm expansion. He costs about \$3.

Gavin Light

human male

Abilities

Strength/Stamina: 45/45
Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 60/55
Intuition/Logic: 50/45
Personality/Leadership: 50/45
Initiative Modifier: +6

Skills (Military PSA)

Beam Weapons-2
Martial Arts-1
Projectile Weapons-1
Thrown Weapons-1

Weapons

Hand-to-Hand: % to hit: 40, Dmg: 4
Sonic Stunner: % to hit: 50, Dmg: stun
Tangler Grenade: % to hit: 40, Dmg: entanglement

Equipment

Chronocom, sonic stunner, tangler grenade, military skein-suit

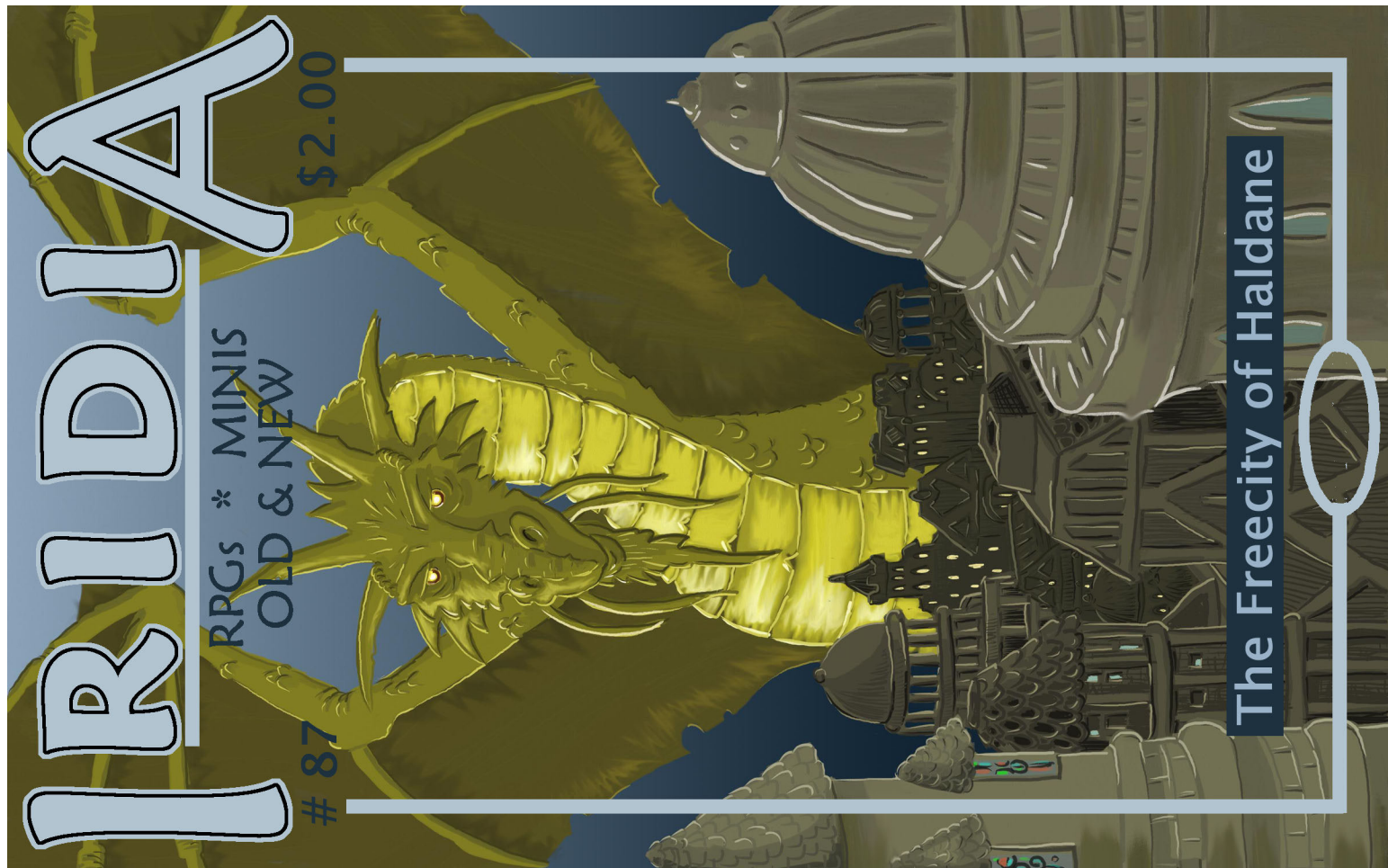
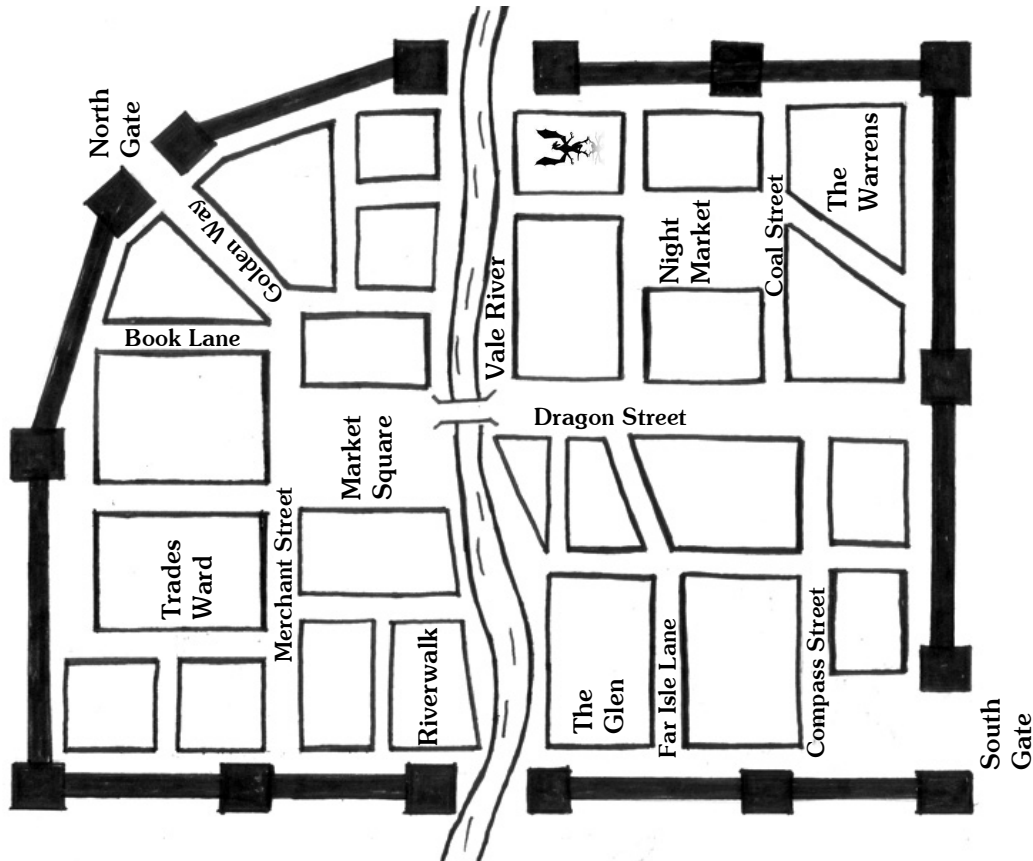
Bio

Gavin was a former criminal, who was redeemed through service on the dralasite world of Groth. He joined their Civil Defense Force, received training and counseling, then emerged as a productive citizen.



The Imperial Officer, also from the Rebel Storm expansion, is easy to come by and affordable at \$1.

The Freecity of Haldane



the Freecity, he is rather impatient with ineptitude as it pertains to outsiders.

Like all dragons, Aurumvorax lusts for gold and treasure. His horde is impressive, which causes some citizens to resent his wealth. They wonder how much of their taxes go toward the maintenance of the Freecity and how much of it is used for Aurumvorax's bedding.

In his human form Aurumvorax appears as a striking, tall man in his thirties with shoulder-length blond hair, amber eyes and a gold hue to his skin.

Aurumvorax (male gold dragon); AL: Lawful; MV: 90' (30'), Fly 240' (80'); AC: -2; HD: 11; HP: 66; Atk: 3 or 1 (2 claws, 1 bite or breath); Dmg: 2d4/2d4/6d6; Spells: 1-Charm Person, Light, Magic Missile, Protection from Evil, Sleep; 2-Detect Evil, Detect Invisible, Detect Magic, ESP, Web; 3-Clairvoyance, Hold Person, Lightning Bolt x 2; SV: F11; ML: 10; XP: 4,400 (1,200 base + 800 x 4 for the following special abilities: flight, shape change, spells and breath weapon).

Aurumvorax has two breath weapons available to him. (He still only gets three breath attacks per day.) He can breathe a 90' long, 30' wide cone of fire or a 50' long, 40' wide cloud of chlorine gas.

His treasure horde consists of 4,000 cp, 20,000 sp, 15,000 ep, 20,000 gp, 20 x 100 gp gems, 20 x 200 gp jewelry, Potion of Undead Control, Ring of Water Walking, Sword +2 and Shield +2.

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The Freecity of Haldane
a labyrinth lord supplement

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I wouldn't complain if you sent me a few bucks, a PayPal donation or a nice note to secure the next few issues of Iridia.

FORWARD

Somewhere along the way, things got too damn complicated. The thickness of D&D rulebooks swelled and I found myself massaging my temples while GMing the game I grew up with. What happened to my beloved D&D?

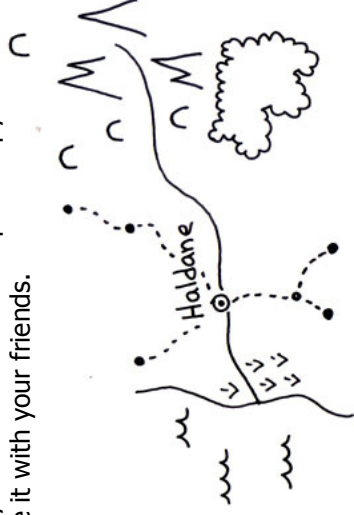
Thank goodness for the "retro-clone" movement. Games like Labyrinth Lord offer an easy to understand toolkit that emulates a classic style. In this issue of Iridia I'd like to present the Freecity of Haldane. I hope to someday use it as the base of operations for a group of adventurers. Every hero needs somewhere to rest between maulings, so perhaps Haldane can be that place.

The material in this issue has been gathered from previous Iridias. It bothered me that the articles supporting the Freecity were spread out over five issues. It's nice to have them all between two covers. I accept that the city is largely incomplete. The elven quarter could use some work and it would be nice to have more shops and NPCs detailed. Nevertheless, it's a good start and perhaps I can expand upon the material in a revised supplement.

I hope you enjoy the read. Feel free to photocopy the hell out of this issue and share it with your friends.

Until next time,

Christian



AURUMVORAX

"I've watched over this city for far too long to let anything bad happen to it."

Aurumvorax the Gold

Aurumvorax is a mature gold dragon and the ruler of the Freecity of Haldane. When Aurumvorax was a hatchling, the city was nothing more than a few tents inhabited by nomads. As the settlement grew, so did the dragon's interest. He was - and remains - fascinated by the lives of humans and demi-humans. Their romances, humor, triumphs and tragedies never cease to amaze him.

Thanks to his shape-changing ability, Aurumvorax was able to interact with the people who built the city. As he watched Haldane grow from camp to village to town to city, he began to feel a certain fondness for the place. After all, he had personally known generations of Haldane's inhabitants.

Methodically, Aurumvorax ingrained himself into a position of power and influence by posing as a human merchant. He gradually revealed his true identity until Haldane's citizens were quite taken with the idea of a draconic mayor. As a result, Aurumvorax has enjoyed managing Haldane for nearly a century.

Aurumvorax governs the city with the assistance of capable ministers and officials. He prefers that the city runs smoothly and efficiently, but Aurumvorax understands that demi-humans and humans are fallible. He also employs a group of stout dwarf warriors as his personal bodyguard. The dwarfs, recruited from a distant mountain forge, are loyal and impossible to bribe.

Because Aurumvorax is a magical creature, he prizes arcane pursuits. Under his tutelage, Haldane has earned a reputation as a center for magical research. The hall where Aurumvorax holds court is always teeming with alchemists, aspiring magic-users, explorers and anyone interested in the arcane.

Aurumvorax is always looking for adventuring groups to retrieve rare ingredients for a potion, a lost book of spells or to perform some task vital to the welfare of Haldane. He pays well, but is rather demanding. While Aurumvorax allows for missteps among the citizens of

Cult of Veoden

Alignment: Chaotic

Allies: None

Enemies: The Church of Elyswen, Order of the Dragon
Motivation: Veoden the Old, Veoden the Grey, the Withered One. All of these names are used to describe the dark deity of death and disease. Veoden's followers are interested in two things: power and immortality. Veoden has the power to grant both, provided his subjects serve him without question. Veoden's followers are asked to commit horrible acts, but the reward is great. Long life, wealth and power are granted to the favored worshipers, but disease and horrible afflictions are bestowed upon the unworthy. The latter followers are occasionally unleashed upon Haldane to wage campaigns of terror.

The Thieves' Guild

Alignment: Chaotic

Allies: None

Enemies: Everyone
Motivation: Because they ply their trade in a city with a draconic mayor, a wizard's society and have morlocks lurking in the sewers, Haldane's rogues operate with extreme caution and secrecy. There are only 20 or so full-time thieves in the city. They engage in crimes such as pickpocketing, burglary, extortion and the occasional robbery. The thieves choose their targets carefully and try to avoid a target that is well-connected. There are many rumors surrounding the guild leader's identity, but some whisper that he (it?) is a doppelganger!

The Morlocks

Alignment: Chaotic

Allies: None

Enemies: Everyone

Motivation: The morlocks are descendants of an ancient society that long ago succumbed to decadence and hubris. The ruins of their city state now lay below the plains surrounding Haldane. Forced to flee the sunlit world - they had so angered the gods they were forced underground - the morlocks now live in caves, winding tunnels and in deep, forgotten chambers. Envious of the city that has now risen above their ruins, the morlocks lash out in vengeful spasms of violence. Haldane's citizenry would like to see the morlocks eliminated entirely, but no one can decide who has the resources or skills to undertake such an expedition.

INTRODUCTION

"We pride ourselves on being open-minded. After all, the mayor breathes fire. And poison gas."

Stefan Cole, merchant

The Freecity of Haldane is situated along a gently flowing river, which meanders through a fertile plain. To the north of the city is an expansive grassland, where much of Haldane's meat, dairy and other foodstuffs are produced. To the east lay mountains, whose lofty peaks are blanketed with snow during the winter months. Several miles to the west is a marshland where the river flows into the sea. Roads connect Haldane to nearby settlements.

Haldane is ruled by the gold dragon Aurumvorax, who delegates responsibilities to officials and administrators. (pg. 19) Although the dragon's office is an elected position, he has run unopposed for 75 years. The city is a haven for craftsmen, artisans, scholars and anyone looking for a relatively clean and safe city to live in. This isn't to say that Haldane does not have problems. Morlocks - degenerate, subterranean humanoids - lurk in the city's sewers, while ogres wander the plains to the north. Large wolves come down from the mountains to pick off lone travelers and trolls stalk the marsh to the west.

The city enjoys a diverse population. A contingent of elves maintain an exclusive, well-landscaped city block. Dwarves from a forge deep within Mount Gravenauer (a high mountain peak to the east) work as masons and blacksmiths. Halfings from the plains are a common sight as well. Their carts full of fresh produce are a welcome addition to the city market. The occasional centaur and gnome can also be seen in the streets.

Haldane can be used as a base of operations for adventurers. Its inns, temples and other services could be very useful between expeditions into the nearby swamps or mountains. The city's politics and other dangers could also provide excitement. On the following pages, Haldane's wards, factions, prominent citizens and random encounters will be presented. While every corner of the city is not explored, the information provided should be enough for a GM to launch a successful campaign.

HALDANE'S WARDS

Haldane has diverse wards and significant thoroughfares that give the city a unique personality. Some wards have random encounters listed to assist a GM in describing a particular neighborhood. The GM should feel free to elaborate upon each entry as needed. A few of the entries might lead to role-playing or combat encounters, while others are designed to answer that common PC question, "So, what do I see on the street?"

The "People and Places of Interest" entries might be helpful in bringing the city alive. Again, the GM should alter the NPCs or locations to suit his needs.

Trades Ward

This borough is home to the city's craftsmen and their workshops. Its close proximity to the market square facilitates the easy sale of goods. Aurumvorax believes in fair and open competition, so there are no trade guilds that might stifle ambition or fix prices.

People and Places of Interest

The Cask and Cleaver

Located on Merchant Street, the Cask and Cleaver is a rustic tavern with a great deal of character. The tavern attracts caravan guards, a few members of the City Watch, scouts and other martial specialists. It's the kind of place where stories can be swapped and rumors of good-paying jobs can be shared.

Miles Noll is the ham-fisted owner of the Cask and Cleaver. He's a former scout who led many caravans safely from destination to destination until he finally decided to retire.

Abel Artone

A regular at the Cask and Cleaver, Abel is always looking for work as a swordsman. He would gladly hire on as a henchman if a party offered him good pay and a fair share of any treasure. From his adventures, Abel has acquired a healthy respect for powerful non-humans. He is suspicious of Aurumvorax and would much rather be governed by a man than a dragon. As a result, he has joined the steadily growing

they overhear quite a bit of juicy gossip, in addition to finding rather interesting items carelessly cast aside. The Rat Catchers are not above a bribe to share valuable rumors.

Society of the Magi

Alignment: Neutral

Allies: Order of the Dragon

Enemies: Council for a Free Haldane

Motivation: The Society of the Magi is tight-knit, exclusive organization for magic-users and sages. The society cooperates to share lore, spells and magic items. Moreover, the Society of the Magi provides checks and balances on their membership. They ensure that wizards have the right to practice their craft, while at the same time making sure that no single magic-user becomes corrupted. The society is underwritten by Aurumvorax, who provides gold and political support. In exchange, he is able to call upon the society to aid him when the need arises. The Society of the Magi is wary of the Council for a Free Haldane.

Council for a Free Haldane

Alignment: Neutral

Allies: None

Enemies: Society of the Magi, Order of the Dragon

Motivation: Founded by a self-styled "Lord", the Council for a Free Haldane was created by Damon Howell. Damon spent many years exploring the mountains, swamps and other wild spaces around Haldane. He earned a name for himself as a legendary swordsman when he and his fellow adventurers (collectively known as the Company of the Pegasus) slew a band of giants that had harried the farmlands north of Haldane.

After acquiring significant power and influence, Lord Damon wishes to build a stronghold. He would like to construct a keep adjoining the city walls, but Aurumvorax has blocked this. The dragon feels that Lord Damon wishes to assume control of the city and do away with free elections and many individual freedoms in favor of a dynastic (i.e., feudal) style government. To thwart Aurumvorax, Lord Damon is spending a considerable amount of money to influence Haldane's citizens and wealthy elite.

Because they are closely tied to Aurumvorax, Lord Damon does not trust the Society of the Magi.

Church of Elyswen

Alignment: Lawful

Allies: The Night Watch

Enemies: The Cult of Veoden

Motivation: Elyswen is a goddess of peace. She cares deeply for her worshippers and instructs her clerics to provide assistance to those in need. Elyswen's temple is a busy place, with worshippers attending services, the sick looking for healing and the hungry asking for alms. Elyswen's followers are bitterly opposed to the Cult of Veoden and occasionally hire adventurers to drive away followers of the rival church. Elyswen had a sister named Leandra, who was slain by a powerful demon lord of the undead. Leandra is now revered as a saint and is prayed to by those who must battle the undead.

The Night Watch

Alignment: Lawful

Allies: Church of Elyswen

Enemies: The Thieves' Guild

Motivation: The Night Watch is a group of selfless individuals who worship a minor deity named Shavin the Night Watchman. Shavin walks beside lost and lonely travelers, providing company, solace and a helpful light to illuminate darkened roads. His followers believe that the path to salvation lays in following their deity's example. To that end, they shine lanterns into darkened alleys, alert the City Watch of burglaries and walk lone individuals home.

Fraternal Order of Rat Catchers

Alignment: Neutral

Allies: Church of Elyswen

Enemies: Morlocks, Thieves' Guild

Motivation: The men and women who rid Haldane of vermin are an uncelebrated lot. They toil in the city's sewers, alleys and basements, constantly keeping a tide of rats and pesky insects in check. The Rat Catchers care little for politics; they just want to get their jobs done and go home at the end of the day.

They occasionally run afoul of morlocks and thieves while going about their duties, so they have a deep hatred of those two groups. Fortunately, the Church of Elyswen takes pity on the Rat Catchers and frequently heals their wounds and cures any diseases they contract for free.

Because they have access to all of Haldane's nooks and crannies,

ranks of the Council for a Free Haldane. (pg. 17)

Abel Artone, Fighter 3; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities:

Str 15, Int 9, Wis 9, Dex 10, Con 16, Cha 8; AC: 3

(banded mail, shield); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 22; At-

tacks: Longsword +1 (+2 to hit and damage, 1d8+2);

Move: 30'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1

to force doors, +1 adjustment to reactions; Equipment:

Banded mail, shield, longsword +1, 15 gp.

Encounters in the Trades Ward

Day

- 1) A master craftsman berates an underling for improperly cutting some wooden planks. He holds a cane in his hand and is about to beat the poor fellow, who trembles with fear.
- 2) Six porters push through the street, carrying heavy boxes (cases of wine). They bowl through the crowd, knocking down an old man who falls hard to the ground. They don't bother to stop or apologize.
- 3) A wealthy merchant walks down the street, an assistant trailing behind him. The merchant appears to be very wealthy, as he and his underling are dressed quite nicely.
- 4) Three craftsmen stand outside a workshop, drinking wine from a flask during a break. They leer at passing women and make loud, crass remarks.
- 5) A wagon makes its way down the crowded lane. The drover yells loudly for the crowd to part and begins cracking his whip above people's heads.
- 6) A dwarf blacksmith stands in the door of his shop, showing off a wonderfully-crafted sword. The warrior he is presenting it to holds up an exquisite gem as payment.

Night

- 1) A halfling with a bag over his shoulder, runs out of an alley, spots the PCs, then runs back in.
- 2) At the end of a long day, two craftsmen walk down the middle of

road, tipsy from too many pints at the tavern.

- 3) Four members of the City Watch shine a lantern into an alley as if looking for someone.
- 4) Five teamsters load a wagon in the middle of the night. (They are hoping to get an early start on an overland journey the next morning.)

Market Square

Haldane's market square is as you'd expect. It's full of stalls, merchants, shoppers and a bewildering variety of goods and services. City guards keep an eye peeled for pickpockets at all times.

People and Places of Interest

The Rookery

Facing the market square, the Rookery is a well-known inn popular with merchants and other travelers. The inn is a sturdy, three storey building. Out front hangs a red sign with a golden eagle emblazoned upon it.

The owners are a charming couple in their 50's named Gibson and Jenna. Jenna takes care of the front of the house, while Gibson manages the kitchens and other domestic duties. Prices are modest and guests will find the rooms to be clean and tidy.

Kylie

A member of Haldane's Thieves' Guild (pg. 18), Kylie uses her charm and good looks to get close to potential targets. She patrols the Market Square, looking for lone individuals who look like they may be new to the city.

Kylie, Thief 4; Alignment: Chaotic; Abilities: Str 9, Int 10, Wis 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Cha 15; AC: 5 (leather armor, +2 dex); Hit Dice: 4; Hit Points: 11; Attacks: Dagger (+2 to hit when thrown, 1d4); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: -1 to reactions, thief abilities, backstab; Equipment: Dagger, leather armor, 2 x 25 gp gems.

FACTIONS AND SOCIETIES

Like any city, Haldane has a number of political factions and organizations that influence daily life. Some have nothing but good intentions, while others are wicked. Nine organizations are described, three each for the Lawful, Neutral and Chaotic alignments.

Order of the Dragon

Alignment: Lawful

Allies: Society of the Magi

Enemies: The Thieves' Guild, Morlocks, Cult of Veoden, Council for a Free Haldane

Motivation: Lead by Grammel Ironmaul, the Order of the Dragon are 12 stout dwarves who act as Aurumvorax's personal bodyguard. The dragon also relies upon the dwarves to handle threats that are immediate and severe, such as a sighting of morlocks in the sewers. They are well-paid and loyal. It's an honor for them to serve the gold dragon, so they have a morale of 10.

Grammel Ironmaul, Dwarf 6;

Alignment: Lawful;
Abilities: Str 16, Int 10, Wis 11, Dex 11, Con 16, Cha 11; AC: 2 (plate mail +1); Hit Dice: 6; Hit Points: 36; Attacks: War hammer +1 (+3 to hit & damage, 1d6+3); Move: 30'; Languages: Common, dwarven, goblin, gnome, kobold; Special Abilities: Infravision, 2 in 6 chance of detecting traps, false walls, hidden construction or sloped passages; Equipment: Plate mail +1, war hammer +1, 20 gp, 50 gp gem.

Night

- 1) A cleric of Elysweyn hands out loaves of bread to a line of poor people.
- 2) Four men fill lanterns with oil. (They are members of the Night Watch preparing for their rounds.)
- 3) Three acolytes wash down the steps in front of the church of Risa the Bountiful.
- 4) Two worshippers hurry home after a late night prayer meeting.

Book Lane

Haldane is home to many sages, alchemists and aspiring magic-users. Most live, work and study in the neighborhood between Book Lane and Golden Way.

People and Places of Interest

Gypsum Pembrook, Wizard for Hire

At some point in their career, every adventurer will require a magic-user to identify a potion, divine the activation word for a wand or to sell them a scroll. For all of those needs and more, Gypsum Pembrook is an excellent choice.

Gypsum is a 9th level magic-user and one of the most talented spellcasters in the city. She is a prominent member of the Society of the Magi (pg. 17) and is respected by her peers. Characters will rarely deal with Gypsum directly. Instead, PCs will negotiate with one of her apprentices or assistants. Gypsum's prices are average and she works quickly. The following services are offered:

Identify a Potion: 50 gp
 Brew a Potion: 500 gp x level of the spell
 Identify a Magic Item (and reveal activation word if applicable): 100 gp
 Sell a Scroll: 500 gp x level of the spell

North Gate

This gate is used primarily by merchants. It is frequently crowded and jammed with wagons, beasts of burden and carts. South Gate is a much more pedestrian-friendly option.

Encounters in the Market Square

Day

- 1) A halfling farmer sells turnips from a cart. He tells anyone who will listen that turnips are good for the heart.
- 2) A fishmonger holds smelly carp in the faces of passer-bys, begging them to make a purchase.
- 3) A young man rushes through the crowd, dodging shoppers with impressive dexterity. Not long after, a member of the City Watch gives chase.
- 4) A very happy dwarf rolls a wheelbarrow laden with a keg of ale through the market square.
- 5) A woman screams at a merchant, upset that she has been sold low-quality beef.
- 6) Patting his bulging pouch, a well-dressed man walks past the party and says to himself, "Yes, today was a very good day indeed."

Night

- 1) Too tired to push his cart home for the night, a merchant snoozes under it.
- 2) Two men quietly discuss a private matter.
- 3) A beggar carefully walks the square, looking for dropped coins.
- 4) Two men with lanterns escort a cloaked figure. (They are members of the Night Watch. See pg. 16.)

Riverwalk

This exclusive neighborhood is home to the city's most wealthy individuals. Their houses are well-guarded and often protected by a gate or low wall. Private guards patrol the streets and frequently challenge strangers to declare their names and business in the area.

People and Places of Interest

The Home of Caleb Stone

Caleb Stone is a wealthy landlord, who owns a number of dilapidated buildings in the Warrens. The coins he squeezes from the tenants fund his lavish lifestyle. Caleb frequently entertains an intimate group

of friends. The details of those parties are a closely guarded secret, but some whisper that dark rites are practiced. While these rumors cannot be confirmed, there is substance to them.

Caleb Stone, Cleric 3; Alignment: Chaotic; Abilities:

Str 11, Int 12, Wis 14, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 9; AC: 6 (bracers of armor AC 6); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 10; Attacks: Mace (1d6); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to magic-based saving throws, turn undead; Spells: 1-Cause Light Wounds, Darkness; 2-Curse; Equipment: Bracers of Armor AC 6, mace, 35 gp.

As a follower of Veoden (pg. 18), Caleb craves power, wealth and pleasures of the flesh. He will destroy anyone who gets in the way of him acquiring those things.

The Glen

Elves who live in or visit Haldane stay in this area. The streets are immaculate, the buildings tastefully painted and gardens abound. Because the elves prefer their privacy, gates restrict access to everyone, except city officials or those who have business with the elves.

Encounters in the Glen

Day

- 1) Three human guards approach the PCs and demand to know their business.
- 2) Two elves quietly have a discussion under a shade tree.
- 3) An elven woman plays a flute while watching the street below.
- 4) Two halfling porters carry wrapped packages.
- 5) A well-dressed dwarf strides down the road, smiling broadly.
- 6) Three human guards approach the PCs and ask if they are lost.

Night

- 1) A beautiful woman dressed in fine silks is escorted down the street

Sister Jessica

Sister Jessica of the Temple of Elyswen is driven by a desire to aid those who are less fortunate. She spends her time visiting the sick and encouraging people to donate to the church's various causes. In a less frequent capacity, Sister Jessica serves as a liaison between the church and the specialists they sometimes hire. From time to time the church might require outside help (i.e., adventurers) to tackle some task. In these instances, Sister Jessica will handle negotiations, arrange for healing (if needed) and will tend to any other details.

Sister Jessica, Cleric 3; Alignment: Lawful; Abilities:

Str 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Cha 13; AC: 5 (chain mail); Hit Dice: 3; Hit Points: 12; Attacks: Mace (1d6); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to magic-based saving throws, -1 adjustment to reactions, turn undead; Spells: 1-Cure Light Wounds, Detect Evil; 2-Hold Person; Equipment: Chain mail, mace, potion of healing, 10 gp.

Encounters on Compass Street

Day

- 1) A cleric of Weyoun the Wanderer blesses a merchant, his two wagons, drovers and guards.
- 2) A pretty woman asks the party if they would like to donate to a feed the poor fund sponsored by the church of Elyswen.
- 3) A cleric of Risa the Bountiful offers the party an apple from her basket.
- 4) A dwarf walks down the street, waving off the cleric of Elyswen who asks him for a donation.
- 5) Three city watchmen quickly escort a babbling, wild-haired man down the street. The gibbering prophet screams of doom and hellfire.
- 6) A street urchin offers to sell the party good luck charms for a few coppers each.

- 4) A member of the City Watch stands in the middle of the street, shaking his head as an elderly woman yells at him.
- 5) Three young toughs stare at the party from an alley.
- 6) A cleric of Elyswen (pg. 16) helps an elderly man walk down the street.

Night

- 1) A drunk staggers up to the party and asks if they can buy him some ale.
- 2) Three men with lanterns inquire about the welfare of a drunk laying in the street. (They are members of the Night Watch.)
- 3) In an alley, a man gropes a lady of the night.
- 4) From behind closed doors, a couple screams at one another.

Compass Street

Haldane's temples and churches can be found along this street. Followers of chaotic gods are not permitted to assemble, but that doesn't mean they are without their secret gathering places.

The churches of Elyswen (ellis-wen), Shavin the Night Guardian, Risa the Bountiful and Weyoun the Wanderer are the most popular.

People and Places of Interest

The Temple of Elyswen

The followers of Elyswen value peace, serenity, forgiveness and generosity. To that end, the clerics of the church care for the sick and needy. They also provide healing to wounded adventurers, then use the money charged for their charitable causes. Below is a list of spells that can be cast by clerics at the temple. Each character can only receive one spell per day.

Cure Light Wounds: 50 gp
 Cure Serious Wounds: 250 gp
 Cure Critical Wounds: 500 gp
 Cure Disease: 200 gp
 Heal: 750 gp
 Raise Dead: 2,000 gp
 Regenerate: 750 gp

by a bodyguard with a lantern.

- 2) Two elves chat on a corner before embracing, then parting ways.
- 3) An owl lands atop a streetlamp and eyes the party.
- 4) Four guards approach the party and ask if they can be of service.

The Night Market

This square is used as a gathering place for friends, lovers and those wishing to browse the stalls of merchants selling goods that might raise a few eyebrows during the day. The block to the northeast of the Night Market is home to Aurumvorax. (Look for the dragon icon on the city map on the back cover of this issue.) He lives in a beautifully designed, sprawling mansion that features private gardens, an excellent library, servants' quarters and alert security.

People and Places of Interest

The Stone Goblet

Visiting dwarves know that the best place to go for a pint is the Stone Goblet. Ale and song flow freely in this squat, sturdy establishment. The tavern is the frequent watering hole of Aurumvorax's personal bodyguards, the Order of the Dragon. (pg. 15)

The House of Silk Veils

This brothel is typical in many respects. There are plenty of women to choose from, as well as a few halfings for those with a penchant for the wee folk. The brothel's madame is named Aeryn. At 40, she still retains much of her beauty. It is said that she would pay handsomely for any potion that could preserve her looks or restore her youth. The brothel's bouncer is a towering brute named Heydric. He screens all potential customers and will turn away anyone he thinks might cause problems.

Brother Jacob of the Night Watch

Brother Jacob is a young, eager follower of Shavin the Night Watchman. Because people congregate at the Night Market to drink and make merry, Brother Jacob is present to escort the inebriated home. If he survives dark alleyways filled with rats and thieves, Brother Jacob hopes to someday shine like the sun into places dark and dangerous.

Brother Jacob of the Night Watch, Cleric 1; Alignment: Lawful; Abilities: Str 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Cha 12; AC: 4 (chain mail, shield); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 6; Attacks: Mace (1d6); Move: 30'; Languages: Common; Special Abilities: +1 to magic-based saving throws, turn undead; Spells: 1-Light; Equipment: Chain mail, mace, shield, lantern, flask of oil.

Encounters in the Night Market

Day

- 1) Children play a game of tag.
- 2) The square is empty. A few leaves blow in the wind.
- 3) A mangy hound scratches at fleas.
- 4) A merchant checks his wares as he prepares for the evening.

Night

- 1) Two lovers enjoy a deep kiss. A nearby couple watches intently, playful smiles upon their faces.
- 2) A merchant hawks silk scarves. He says that they can enhance romantic encounters.
- 3) An attractive woman asks one of the characters if they need company for the evening.
- 4) A merchant offers the party an herbal tea that he claims can increase one's libido.
- 5) Three dwarfs in plate armor with gold accents talk quietly among themselves. (They are members of the Order of the Dragon.)
- 6) An attractive pair walks slowly through the square.

The Warrens

These few blocks are home to Haldane's less-fortunate citizens. The unemployed, elderly widows, single-mothers and those down on their luck all make their way the best that they can. Aurumvorax ensures that free bread, soup and clean water are distributed to anyone in need. Not only is this a kind and decent act, but it keeps the rabble

from trying to pilfer his horde!

People and Places of Interest

The Pit

Several months ago, a sinkhole, nearly 40' in diameter, formed. The city's sages determined that the event was isolated. It was possibly caused by the collapse of a subterranean chamber. Because the city was built atop the ruins of a much older civilization, such a scenario seemed plausible. There were concerns that morlocks lurking in the sewers caused the cave in, but this speculation has yet to be confirmed or denied.

Since the sinkhole formed, the neighboring residents have taken to filling the pit with all manner of refuse. Human and animal waste, rotting food, broken urns and the occasional body create quite a stink. The Fraternal Order of Rat Catchers (pg. 16) is beside itself with frustration, since the pit attracts rats and other loathsome things.

Marley Crane

Assigned to monitor the pit for unusual rodent activity is Marley Crane. Marley is rather surly, even for a rat catcher. He spends his day chasing away people who attempt to empty their chamber pots into it and tries to keep drunks from falling in. It's not a bad duty as far as rat catching goes, but Marley swears that he saw something large and slimy lurking in the muck.

Marley Crane, Level 0 Human; Alignment: Neutral; Abilities: Str 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 10; AC: 8 (padded); Hit Dice: 1; Hit Points: 4; Attacks: Club (1d4); Move: 40'; Languages: Common; Equipment: Club, torch, rat traps, sack, foul language.

Encounters in the Warrens

Day

- 1) A harried mother screams at her misbehaving children.
- 2) Four dirty children beg the party for coins.
- 3) An old drunk lays slumped against a wall.

#88

02.09.09

Iridia

rpgs & minis, old and new

On Point

I've been meaning to produce a hand-written issue of Iridia. I guess it's another attempt at getting back to the roots of zine publishing. I've always enjoyed hand-written zines because of the personality and energy conveyed.

I've been thinking some more about my GMing and I realize that I need to do a better job with my NPCs. Most tend to be indifferent at best, assholes at worst. If the PCs don't have reliable, decent personalities to interact with, they start viewing everyone and everything in the setting as an enemy.



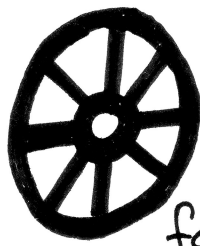
Matt Borselli wrote to tell me that he is ending the 1,000 and 1 nights campaign design zine. It was a great two year run!

Matt will not be idle, though. He's started a new project called Switching to Guns. Cool name! I read the first issue and loved it. The issue presents Portland as a fey stronghold for Changeling: the dreaming. He's even posted a map of downtown Portland on his website. If you look carefully, you can see where Matt used to live.

Until next time, christian ☺

The Church of Weyoun the Wanderer

labyrinth lord



The patron of travelers, wanderers and itinerants, Weyoun is a friend to anyone who calls the road home. His followers often build roadside shrines and way stations that provide secure shelter, as well as a place to replenish supplies and to share news of the road.

Weyoun's holy symbol is a wagon wheel.

A popular saying among Weyoun's followers is, "The road is home to all." Weyoun's followers hold the church of Elyswen (Iridia 87) in high regard.



Brother Evan

Cleric lvl. 3	AC 7 (leather)
Lawful	HP 13
Str 12	<u>Saves</u>
Dex 12	Breath 16
Con 14	Poison/Death 11
Int 11	Petrify/Paralysis 14
Wis 15	Wands 11
Cha 14	Spells 14

Evan is a charming, friendly man. He has an ever-ready smile for his fellow travelers. He loves to help those in need and will often call upon adventurers to assist him in some mission of mercy.

Spells: Protection from Evil, Cure Light Wounds, Hold Person

Gear: Leather armor, sling, quarterstaff, holy symbol, 10 gp, Potion of Flying

 The Iridia Zine
c/o Christian Walker
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#245
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
www.iridiazine.net 

This will be the final
hand-written issue of the
zine. It was fun to
experiment and I appreciate
the understanding and
latitude extended to
me by you.

Peace,
Christian

IRIDIA

role-playing games and
miniatures, old and new

CONTACT

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On Point

#89

February 16, 2009

I've been thinking about campaigns that I wish I could have played in. I'd like to talk about two of them below. They share a commonality in that they were both - or could have been - run by my buddy Matt.

The Dark Creepers

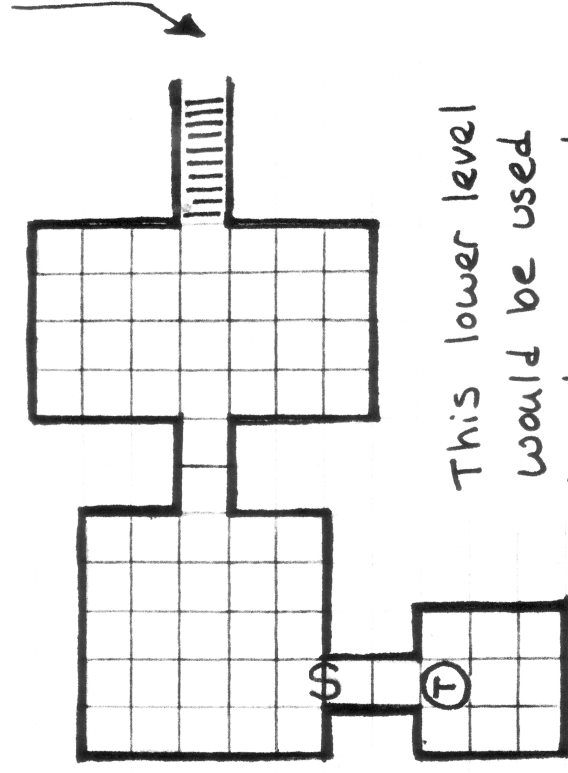
When I left for college, Matt stepped in for a while to assume the mantle of DM for our group.

One of the first story arcs he launched involved a group of Dark Creepers. The sneaky humanoid provided quite the challenge for the players. I heard

I planned on having the PCs deal with 3 encounters:

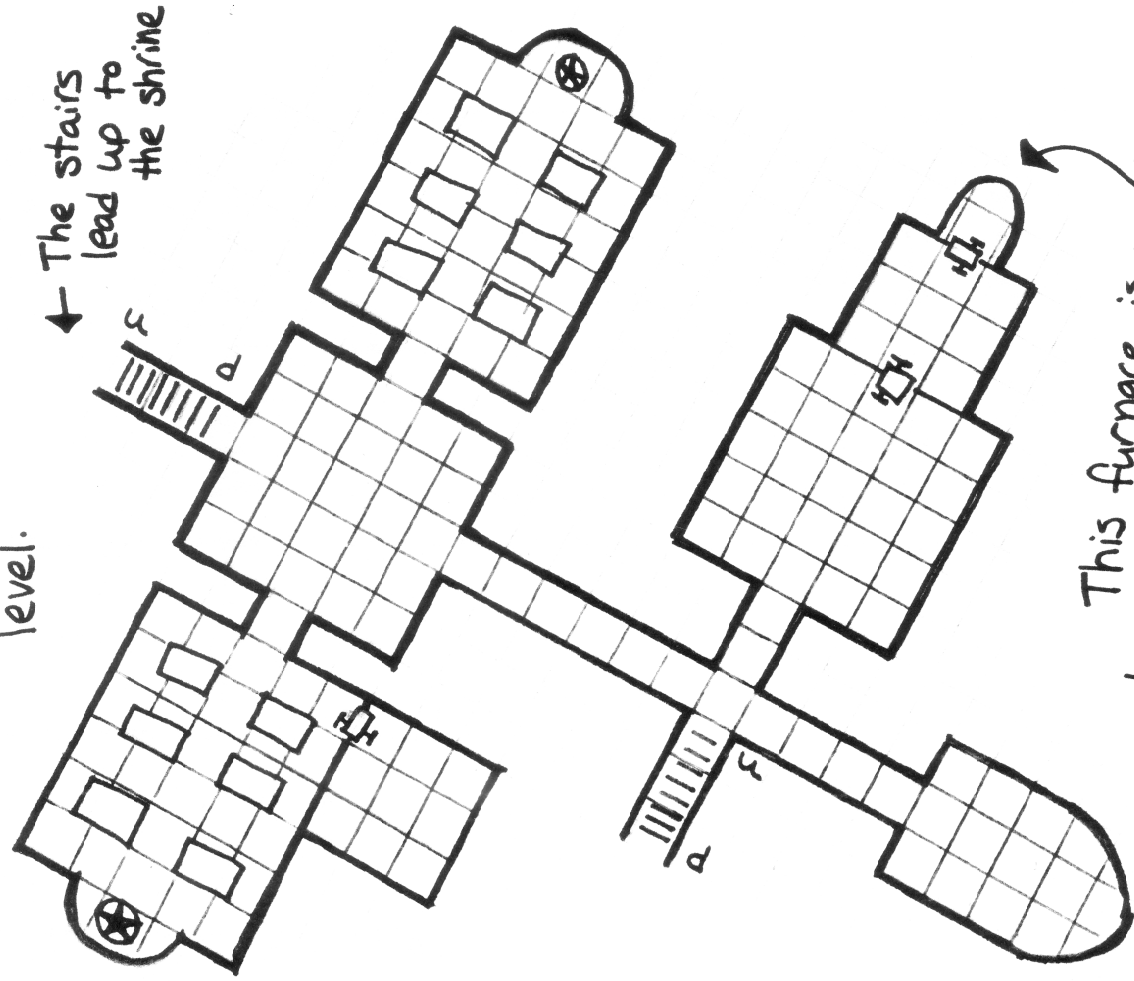
- ① human bandits hiding out from the law
- ② a group of kobolds who had escaped hobgoblin slavers
- ③ a stupid ogre who wanted to turn the shrine into his palace.

up to first
dungeon level



This lower level
would be used
to store sacred
relics.

This level features numerous osuaries and sarcophagi for the bodies of lost and unclaimed travelers. Restless spirits are said to haunt this level.



that ^{the} game played like a horror movie - dark, suspenseful and thrilling!

The Dragon and the Orcs!



Matt owned some half-assed really great Grenadier orc drawing. minis back in the 80s. Seriously. WTF??

He'd sit in his room in the apartment on Ardxys place and paint figs while listening to Shaboooh Shooobah. He had a great bunch of orcs and an awesome blue dragon.

I always wanted to square off with the orcs in a conflict that would lead to a showdown with the blue dragon. It would've been awesome...

Looking back, January was a good month for the zine. The surf was terrible, so I had lots of time to write.

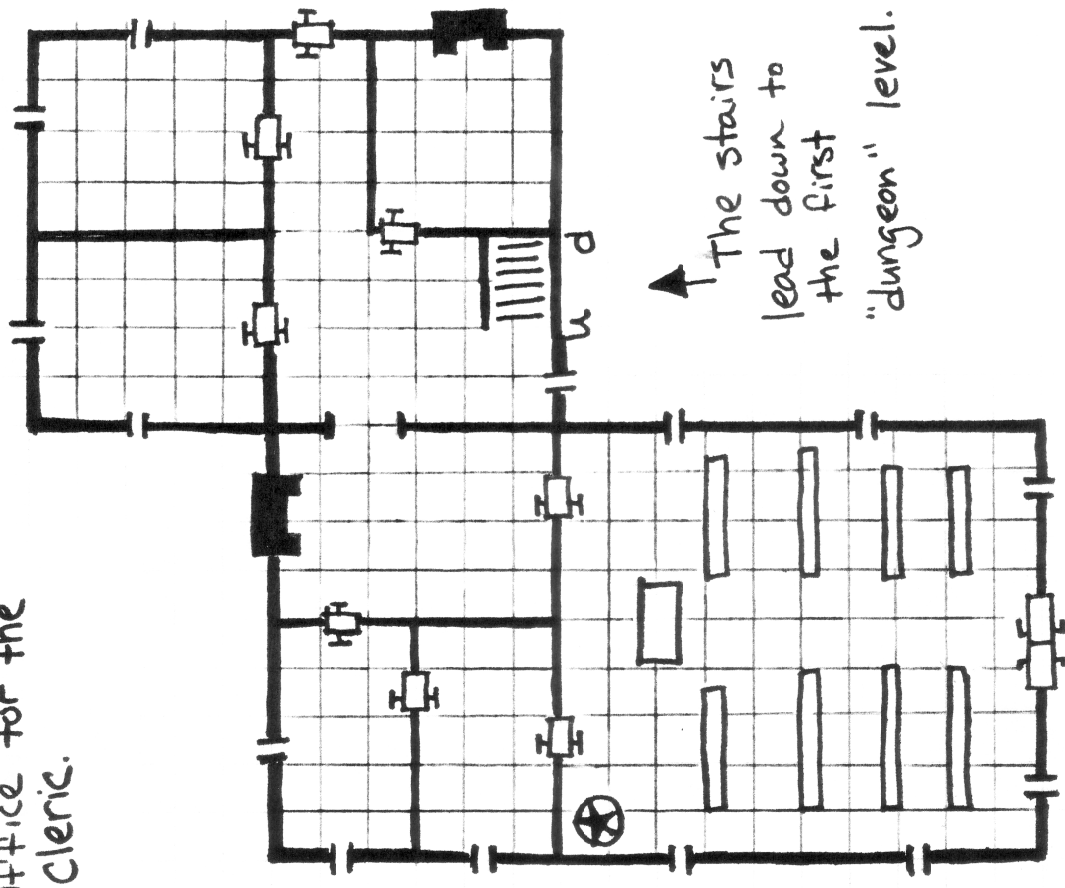
The website received lots of hits, so hopefully people are enjoying what they read.

Although it's a teeny tiny niche, I still think there's an audience for printzines.

I've enjoyed writing these recent issues by hand. It feels more like writing a letter to a friend than anything else.

Until next time,
Christian ☺

The ground floor of the shrine features a place to pray, guest rooms, storage and an office for the cleric.



↑ The stairs lead down to the first "dungeon" level.

The Abandoned Shrine of Weyoun the Wanderer labyrinth lord

I put pen and pencil to graph paper in an attempt design a simple, three level dungeon. I even typed up a few pages of room descriptions.

While I enjoy mapping, the task of dungeon dressing is a bit tedious. I find dungeon exploration to be a bit of a challenge, too. I prefer self-contained adventures that can be knocked out in 5 hours of play. The maps I drew and some brief notes follow.

I dream in 25mm. -miniatures and terrain-

It should have worked out better, but it didn't. The PCs were finally going to square off with the BBEG and 40 of his mooks.

The party had chosen to meet their fate at a small tower they owned. To set the scene, I built a model of it. I am really happy with how it came out.

When the battle was joined, however, it got ugly. Well maybe not ugly. Boring.

D&D 3.5 isn't so great at handling the battle I planned.

Perhaps we would have

been better off playing Warhammer Fantasy Battle.

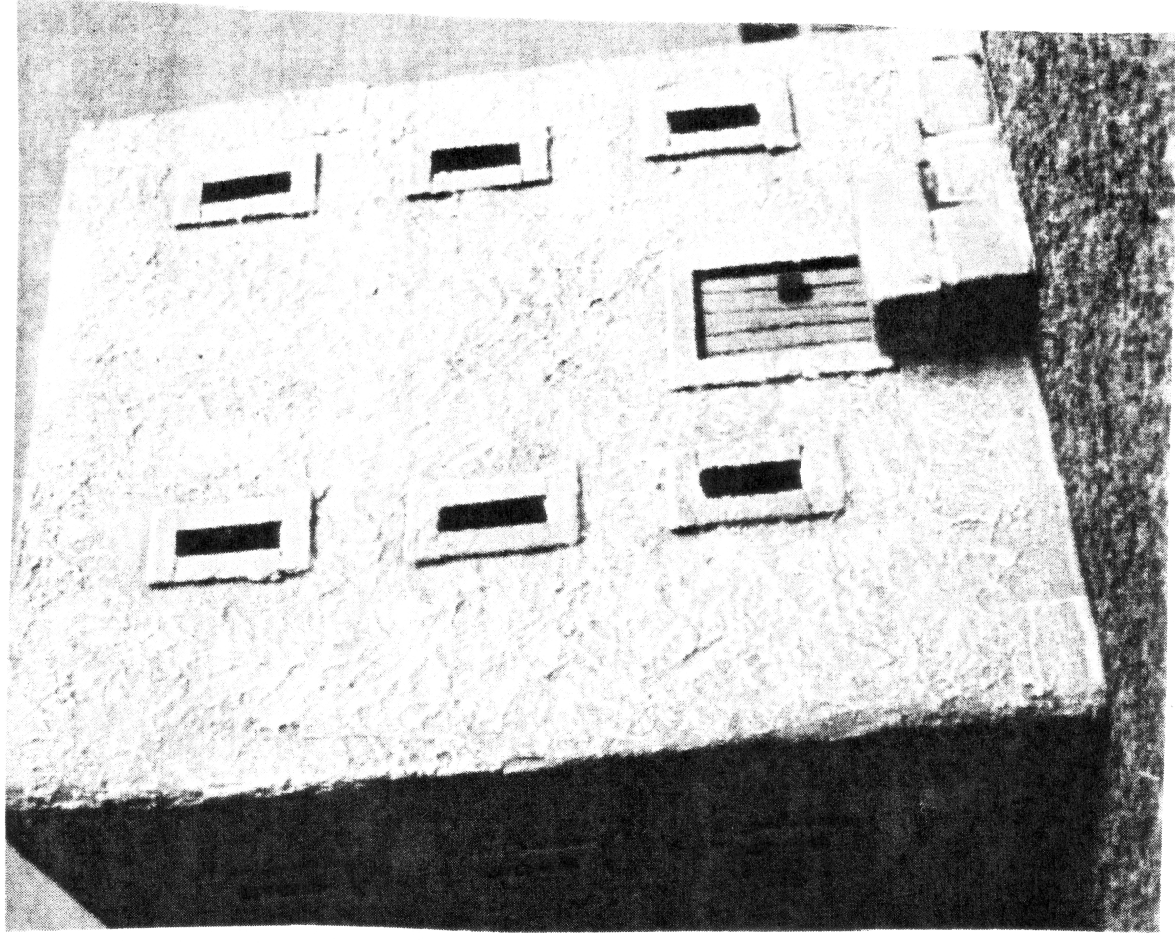
While the PCs carried the day and crushed evil, there was one casualty.

One of the players decided that my episodic, miniatures-heavy play was not to his liking. He exited the campaign, citing a lack of character-based, role-playing rich story.

It's all good, though. He and

I play in the same

Werewolf: the Apocalypse campaign. We get to rip shit up and have a grand time.



Llieron the ranger stymied the enemy's advance with an Entangle spell, while his compatriots lobbed arrows from the windows, er, windows.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

I wanted to start this issue by saying thanks to James M. and Jeff R. for giving Iridia some love in their blogs. They drove some much-needed traffic my way and the zine has five new subscribers as a result. Sweet!

As you can see, I've returned to the single-sheet format. I set a brisk pace for myself in January and I think I need a little break until I rev back up. I expect that the digests shall return shortly.

Baseball season is on the way. I can't wait. There will be mellow evenings at home watching the Dodgers do their thing. In the meantime, I've been doing some reading. It's been great to pick up used paperbacks and read wonderful tales of fantasy and science fiction adventure. From time to time, I'll present a mini-review in a new column called *The Role of Books*. I took the title from a Dragon column of the same name. As always, thanks to Ray Brooks for editing.

Until next time,
Christian

The Role of Books

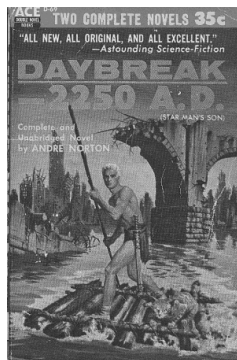
literature and rpgs

Daybreak 2250 A.D. by Andre Norton is an outstanding post-apocalyptic story. Written in 1952, *Daybreak 2250 A.D.* makes a bold social statement in favor of respecting all races and cultures to avoid needless war. The "Beast Things" featured in this book are a mutated rat/human hybrid that would make a great adversary in a Gamma World or Mutant Future campaign.

The book also does an excellent job capturing the xenophobia that tribal groups might have toward one another in a blasted land. Anyone wandering the wilderness would be "free meat for another man's spear" if they could not prove affiliation to a powerful or influential tribe.

Copies can be had from EBay for about \$6. I read the book in two sittings and am hopeful that a sequel was written. This book was also published as *Starman's Son*, so you might find it under that title as well.

Again, another thanks to James M., this time for recommending this book.



I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

I recently ordered a few D&D minis from EBay. One of the figures I picked out was the Warhorse from the Desert of Desolation series. I thought it'd be neat to have a horse in order to represent a mounted PC or foe. When the horse arrived, I was sad to see that he leaned to one side. This had happened to me before, so I thought I'd talk briefly about it this week.

There are a number of D&D minis that suffer from the "leaning sickness." To date, I have found that the following figs emerge bent from the box: Equiceph, Kuo-Toa Hunter, Dire Bat, and Giant Eagle, just to name a few. It's not a big deal, but it would have been nice if these defects were spotted early in the production process. The minis could have been redesigned to avoid being easily bent.

Fortunately, there's a solution to the lean. Immerse the defective mini in nearly-boiling water for 30 seconds, then reform it into a desired shape. Hold it while it cools and you're all set. I tried it on my Giant Eagle and it worked great. It may take a few times, but eventually the plastic will stay in the desired shape.



wobbly warhorse

Actual Play

d&d 3.5

I've been meaning to write about the end of my Quest of the Sorcerer King D&D 3.5 campaign for a while. Specifically, I wanted to write about the penultimate session.

Even though the game is called Dungeons and Dragons, fights with the famous winged reptiles are quite rare. I wanted to inflict a dragon upon the party and the beast did not disappoint. The setup was as follows: A wizard purchased a red dragon egg. He wanted to rear the wyrm, then have it serve him faithfully when it reached adulthood. Sadly, the reality of raising a dragon proved much more difficult than the idea. The young dragon was abandoned in a cave overlooking a valley where halflings lived and that was that.

Eventually, four harpies happened upon the dragon. They vowed to serve and protect him until he reached maturity. They hoped that their loyalty would be greatly rewarded.

Of course, the party appeared on the scene to wreck their plans. The halflings that lived in the valley below the dragon's lair were none too happy about their draconic neighbor. They knew that little dragons eventually grew into big ones. And big dragons had a terrible habit of eating and destroying everything in sight!

The party was hired to ride out and either slay the dragon or drive it off. The group was 6th level, although I had been very generous in the treasure department. I love to give out loot, so the party had the type of magic items you might expect a party of 9th level to have.

The dragon's four harpy companions were the first obstacle the party faced upon entering the lair. The group's wizard failed his Will save and was lured deep into the cave by one of the harpies. The harpy hoped to bring the wizard into range of the dragon's breath weapon. The wizard avoided that fate, however. In short order the harpies were slain and it was time to battle the dragon!

The wizard cast *invisibility* upon himself as well as *mirror image*. This created an interesting dilemma. While the wizard was invisible, the mirror images that swirled around him were not. The wizard then used his Boots of Flying to zoom into the cavern in an attempt to get behind the dragon. Dragons have Blindsight, which allows them to

detect invisible creatures within 60'. When the wizard flew past the dragon, he was close enough to provoke an Attack of Opportunity. The dragon hit with a bite and the roll for the 50% miss chance due to total concealment was successful. This really upset the wizard's player.

The battle raged on. The dragon spewed fire, raked with his claws, and bit with his fangs. The party made expert use of summoned creatures, surrounding the dragon with a veritable menagerie of slashing, stomping, and biting animals. As the dragon's hit points dropped, he was still aware of the wizard. He was smart enough to know that enemy spellcasters were very dangerous and it was likely that the wizard was responsible for most of the summoned creatures. During the battle he yelled out, "I am going to kill you, puny wizard!"

The next round, the dragon charged the wizard's position, raking and biting at the invisible mage. He rolled very well and soon the wizard lay on the ground, dying. Terribly wounded himself, he offered the party an ultimatum. Leave now or the wizard would die. The party agreed and retreated with the body of the mangled wizard. The wizard was healed and all was well. The next day after being fortified with healing spells, the party assaulted the lair once again and quickly slew the dragon.

The mini-campaign should have ended there. It would have been a great high point. Instead, the game went on for another session without the wizard. After the fight with the dragon, the wizard's player sent an e-mail accusing me of having it out for him. He felt that I unfairly targeted his character for attacks and he was deeply hurt.

I asked him to leave the game. I don't cheat during play and to think that I would let a secret grudge influence my judgment is ridiculous. It's just a hobby. I have much bigger issues to deal with in life. Sticking it to another person while playing imaginary elves and orcs is silly.

The experience taught me that it's important for players to separate what happens to them from what happens to their PC. If they can't make that separation, then perhaps rpgs aren't for them.

If you're interested, you can read about our gaming exploits at iridiazine.net/quest.htm.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new



May Dusty the Cat live a long and happy life!



GHOUL
1-25-00 SAM WOOD

TRANSMISSIONS FROM PIPER

Sometimes you must look to the past, to see the future.

Inspired by the writings of one of Science Fiction's master writers, H. Beam Piper, Thousand Suns: Transmissions from Piper, is a collection of new rules and ideas ready to be dropped into your Thousand Suns games!

Coming March 2009 from Rogue Games, Inc.
www.rogue-games.net/tspiper.html

The Iridia Zine
c/o Christian Walker
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Beverly Hills, CA 90212

christian@iridiazine.net

bones and about 62 gold pieces, in various denominations, scattered about. A crude secret door is against the back wall as an escape route if necessary.

7. Blessed Stone

A gold inlaid piece of stone, blessed by some unknown holy god from the past, stretches across the tunnel here. The Ghouls cannot pass this holy area.

8. Exit

Exit to a small cave a fair distance from the cabin.

The old stone door clicked shut and the cellar was plunged in darkness again. The old man stood at the top of the stair with a slight smile on his face. He waited a bit, then slowly closed the door and barred it again. Walking to a basin filled with water, he washed off his face, removing the thick makeup, then he slowly straightened up, stretching his arms and back. The wig went under the bed and so did the smelly clothes. The now much younger and taller man put on a blue robe and pointed hat, put the false teeth into his pocket and picked up a staff hidden by the curtains. Returning to the cellar door, he listened at it, then satisfied that no one was coming out of there, past the one-way door he had rigged, he calmly walked out the door, closing it silently behind him.

Finding the abandoned hut was a stroke of luck and the ghouls there made for an excellent trap. Those few other adventurers that happened by were wonderful test subjects until his true quarry wandered in. His contact in Haldane would pay him well for finally getting rid of those meddlers.

The raven landed on the man's shoulder as he left the cabin. The smiling wizard and his familiar quickly walked out of the clearing into the woods, with only the songbird left to see them go. Night fell and the songbird flew away.

ON POINT

It's just not easy finding people to game with. Even in a city of 4 million people, it's tough to put together a steady group. Recently I made another attempt at getting a Labyrinth Lord game off the ground. It will be a Friday night game, lasting from 6:30 to 9:30 or 10. We'll play weekly in a relaxed, episodic style. I tried to recruit for a similar game before and had no luck. This time around I posted to Goblinoid Games' forums (publisher of LL), EN World, RPG.net, Steve Jackson Games and the West LA Meetup group. I really believe in the retro clone movement (LL in particular) and hope to keep it moving forward by running a campaign. New players might equal more book sales, which might help out with distribution and increased popularity.

In this issue I am proud to present an installment of the Iron Rations series of articles, which follows the exploits of a Basic D&D group of heroes. The series has not been seen in Iridia since issue 62. Matt Borselli of the *Switching to Guns* zine took note of this and sent me a note.

"I'm in the middle of some new 'zine material and was re-reading your 'zine (after printing it out on my new color laser printer!) and thought 'why no new Iron Rations after Issue 62?' Well, I decided to write one of my own for you. Feel free to use it or re-write it if you want. I didn't have access to the Basic D&D set to get the monster stats but figure that if you are interested in this, you could provide them. Let me know what you think!"

-Matt

What do I think? I think it's freaking awesome! Matt's execution of the characters, their attitudes, dialogue and format of the articles is perfect. I really hope you like his submission as much as I do.

Until next time,

Christian

IRON RATIONS

basic d&d

The companions were standing at the side of a dusty road, looking at a crude wooden sign posted on a tree. The sign in part read "Hiroz want'b" with more script below and an arrow pointing to the left. Devon Ashwood scratched his head. Abel Artone just looked baffled. Apris stared intently at the sign. Aithne of Far Isle was watching the woods.

Apris said, "I think I know what it says: Heroes Wanted."

Abel interjected, "That's an arrow, pointing that way. I can read that much."

Devon asked, "Is that a three or a five?"

"A five, and I think that's gold. I think," said Apris.

"Are we done here?" asked Aithne. "I don't trust these woods. I feel we're being watched. Besides, 5 gold isn't much," she finished.

"Well, it's more than we have right now. I say we check it out," said Abel. He wrenched the sign loose from the tree and he started walking, following the arrow's direction. The rest of the group followed him.

"What if it's only three gold?" asked Devon.

A series of signs lead them through the woods to a rough cabin made of old stone blocks and timber. It appeared that the cabin was built on the ruins of a tower, with one of the cabin walls made up of what remained of the tower wall. A raven and a songbird watched from a high pine tree.

Abel loosened his sword in its sheath and muttered to himself, "I hope this is a serious job offer."

Devon walked up to the door and hammered on it. Apris sat down on a large stone block next to Abel, resting her feet. The door remained closed, and Devon looked back at his friends. "Maybe nobody's ho-," he

4. A broken weapon
5. A useful piece of equipment. GM's choice
6. A dagger
7. A sword
8. A broken lantern.

4. Ghoul!

A ghoul (hp 7) waits here, listening for the door to open. He'll follow the party for a while, looking for an opportunity to attack a lone PC.

Ghoul: AC: 6, HD: 2, Move: 90' (30'), Attacks: 2 claws/1 bite, Damage: 1-3, all + special, Save As: Fighter 2, Morale: 9, Alignment: Chaotic.

A successful attack by a ghoul will paralyze any creature of ogre-size or smaller (except elves) unless the victim saves versus Paralysis. The paralysis lasts 2-8 turns unless removed by a cure light wounds spell.

5. Open Cavern

An open cavern. There are 2d6 giant rats (2 hp each) searching for food here. They will attack a lone PC but may not attack a large party. If the rats attack, the ghoul from location 4 will attack as well, hoping to get a tasty snack!

Giant Rat: AC: 7, HD: 1-4 hit points, Move: 120' (40'), Attacks: 1 bite, Damage: 1-3 + disease, Save As: Fighter 1, Morale: 8, Alignment: Neutral.

Anyone bitten by a giant rat has a 1 in 20 chance of being infected. This chance should be checked each time a rat successfully hits. The victim may still avoid the disease by making a saving throw vs. Poison. If failed, the victim will either die in d6 days or the victim will be sick in bed (unable to adventure) for one month. Roll 1d4: the disease is only deadly on a result of 1. The disease may be cured magically.

6. Ghoul Lair

This is the main Ghoul lair. The remaining two ghouls (hp 12, 6) are resting here. There is a wand of magic missiles (7 charges) in a pile of

neck going down them than get hurt by whatever's there." Out loud she said, "Lead on, Devon. You have the light."

Devon stepped into the cellar and slowly walked down the stairs. They swayed but did not break. The cellar was full of boxes and bales, tubs and barrels. Root vegetables hung from the ceiling and the smell was earthy. A large stone door was set in the far wall. Devon stepped up to it and listened, but didn't hear anything.

Aithne, Abel and Apris followed him, but the old man didn't come down, instead watching from the top of the stairs.

"Well," Abel said, pulling out his sword, "Let's go kill some beasties!" and the group marched through the door.

The Cabin and Dungeon

1. Cabin

The cabin is made of stone blocks and timber, with one whole wall part of the former tower. The inside is none too clean. A simple table with two chairs is in the center of the room. Behind a curtain is the old man's sleeping quarters. The walls are hung with lots of junk, shelves filled with old tools, rusted chains, jars with odds and ends. The old man's treasure consists of 5 gold, mostly copper and a few silver, in a clay jar. A barred stout wooden door leads down to the cellar.

2. Cellar

The cellar is original to the tower. Rickety wooden stairs lead down to a room with root vegetables and barrels of brackish water, weak ale and other stale foodstuffs, and broken furniture. A single stone door exits the cellar to the maze. The door is one-way into the maze.

3. The Maze

The door clicks ominously closed, locking the PCs in the maze. A bunch of passages lead off in different directions. The smell here is of deep earth with a faint touch of decay. At each location (A) is a dead (and devoured) adventurer. Mostly they are skeletons. Rooting about the body will result in:

Roll 1d8

1. 1d4 gold pieces
2. A disease! GM's choice
3. 1d4 silver pieces

started to say as the door opened.

A greasy old man, stooped with age and not smelling too good, stepped out. A scowl seemed permanently etched upon his face. "Well? What d'ya want?" he growled.

Devon stepped back, not quite out of smell range and said, "Uh, well, uh. We saw that," pointing to the sign in Abel's hand.

"Ah! Ye must be heroes! Yes!" a gap-toothed grin appeared and the old man motioned to the companions, "Come in, come in!"

The interior of the cabin smelled of old fish and beans. A table with two chairs stood in the center of the room and a barred door was against the back wall, right next to a curtained area with an unmade bed beyond.

The old man said, "I've got me a problem. I kin pay, if'n ya kin fix it for me." He hurried to a shelf and pulled down an old clay jar. He spilled the jar on the table and started counting out grimy coins, "1, 2, 3, Well, I think I have 'bout 5 geld here, in coppa and silva, if that's to yer likin'." He stopped and covered the coins with his hands and said, "But ye got to finish it, first. I'm not payin' up front!"

Abel started to think this was a waste of time so he threw the sign down on the table and angrily asked, "What's your problem, Old Man?"

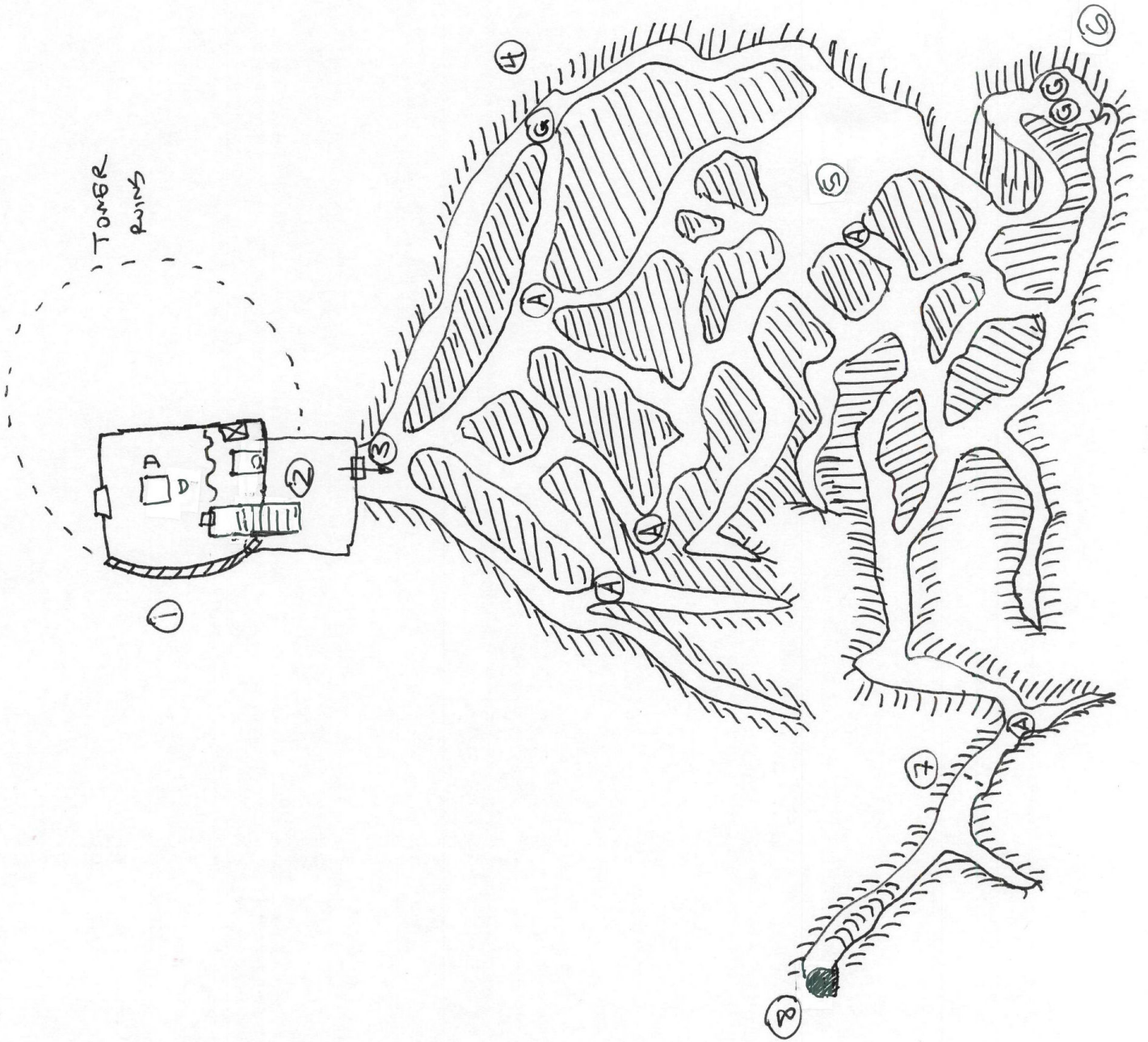
"I've got somethin' livin' in me cellar. Kin ye handle it?" came the angry retort. "Or do ye get out?" The old man's eyes flashed fire!

Devon stepped forward, holding up his hands. "Stay calm, everyone. Yes, we're here to help. What is it?"

The old man grinned. "If I'da known that, I'da handled it meself! It's been makin' some noise fer some time. I don't like to go into the cellar no more." He went to the cellar door, removed the bar, and opened it. Taking a battered lantern down from a shelf, he lit it and held it out to Devon.

"That's an old stone door at the bottom o' the stairs. I've ne'er open'd it but the noise is comin' from behind it. Ya suppose it'd be a Troll?" he said, pointing into the darkness.

Devon and Aithne stuck their heads into the cellar and looked down the stairs. "Pretty rickety," thought Aithne. "I'm more likely to break my



Iridia

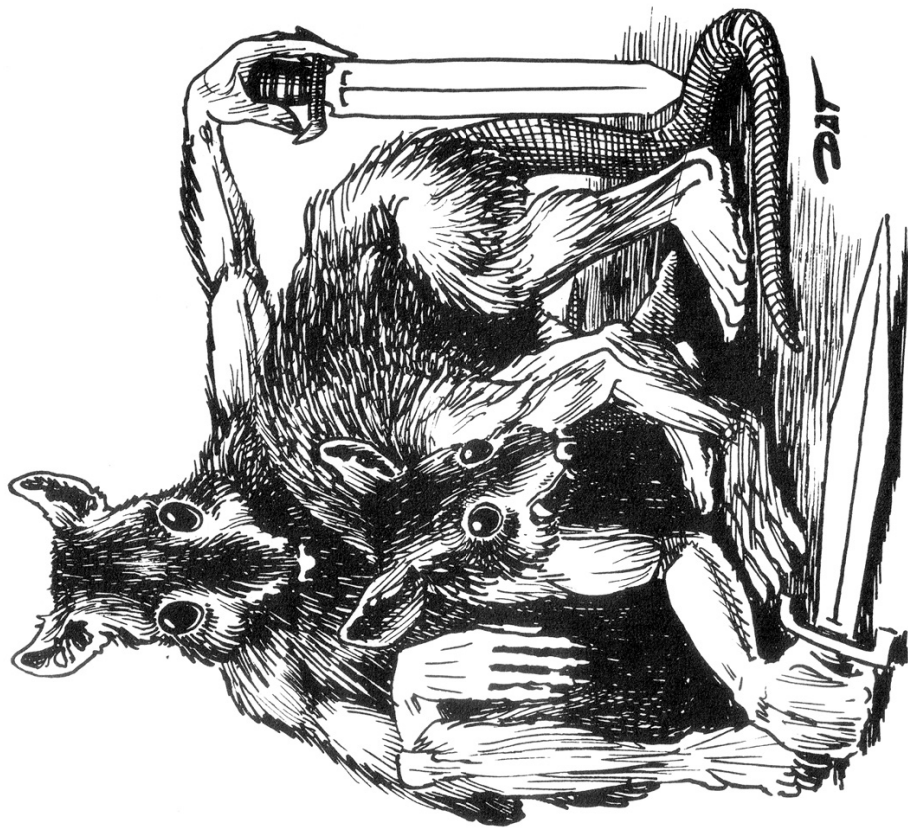
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To represent the giant rats and wererats from this adventure during play, you have a few options.

The Giants of Legend series offers a great-looking Dire Rat figure. The only problem is that it costs between \$2.50 and \$3 on eBay.



The Diseased Dire Rat is a cheaper option and can be had for \$1 or \$2. It was released in the War of the Dragon Queen set.



The Ravenous Dire Rat is the cheapest option at \$1. It was part of the Against the Giants expansion.



A Wererat in hybrid form was released as part of the Dragoneye expansion. It costs around \$3.50.



Another option is the Wererat Rogue from the War of the Dragon Queen set. He's a little harder to find on eBay, but is affordable for around \$2.50.



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the sewer, such as rotting wood and rusting tin jugs. Beyond the barricade is a dark tunnel and further adventure!

Concluding the Adventure

After the adventure, the party will meet with Holdridge, the official who hired them to clear the cellar. If the party is shrewd, they may be able to negotiate for an increased fee, based upon the fact that more giant rats were encountered than initially expected. It is up to the party whether or not they disclose the existence of the wererats. Depending upon how persuasive the party is, Holdridge may increase the fee owed to the party up to 50 gp each.

In any case, Holdridge will ask that the party sketch the area that they explored. If pressed for details about the elaborate tunnels, he will explain that dwarven engineers were hired to dig the town's sewers decades ago. In typical dwarven fashion, the miners were rather zealous and created a network of sewers, tunnels and chambers far beyond the original specifications.

As a result, there was a serious dispute over payment. The town officials refused to pay the dwarves for the elaborate tunneling. The dwarves retaliated by sealing off some of the tunnels and trapping others. The town officials do not even have a complete map of the sewers, so any bit of information helps.

Madame Privett will invite any wounded PCs to rest and recuperate at her home. She will tend to the party until they are fully healed.

Adventure Seeds

- 1) In the next adventure, the PCs may be hired to enter the sewers once again to map the tunnels. Who knows what they may encounter? With wererats and dwarven traps, danger and excitement surely await!
- 2) If the party stays with Madame Privett while their wounds heal, she will share with the party that her husband disappeared under mysterious circumstances. He had rivals and she suspects that his death was no accident. She may hire the PCs to investigate. Madame Privett has a 30 year old daughter, who works as an herbalist and apothecary. She also has suspicions regarding her father's death and may be of assistance.
- 3) Because the PCs were so successful, the town may call upon them to assist with another problem that requires their particular skill set.

ON POINT

Life bumps along about as well as can be expected here in broke ass Southern California. I am happy to have *Iridia* as one of the distractions that keeps my mind off things. I really think gaming could help a lot of people right now. Gaming is inexpensive, it's social, it allows for a creative release and it's fun. I really don't see any downside to throwing the dice around the table for three or four hours once a week.

Nevertheless, it remains a challenge for people to get groups together. I'm not sure what the problem is. Maybe it's because there's so much to do here in Los Angeles. There's always something going on and the weather is great, so folks are always out and about. I'm sure that the decline of the FLGS has something to do with it. There's a shop near me, but fliers posted there seem to do little good. Oh well. I should be grateful for the group that I do have, even if they aren't as into the retro clone movement as I am. ;)

In this week's issue I wanted to start a little serial in the style of the games I used to run using AD&D 2e. In the 90s, I'd scribble a regional map, cobble together a flimsy plot and we'd play. The campaigns never lasted long, but we had fun and at least we were playing. I miss those days of spontaneous gaming. Heck, I miss TSR's heyday in general. They came out with so many amazing settings. There was a lot of garbage to be sure, but with the dross came projects like Planescape, Ravenloft, Dark Sun and Birthright.

My copy of the 2e PHB is falling apart, but I'll do my best to relearn the rules for this series of articles. The first observation I have is this: What the hell is so confusing about THAC0? Seriously. A character's THAC0 minus the opponent's AC equals the to-hit number. My kindergarten students could figure that out.

When possible, I'll rely upon the notes, NPCs and PC write-ups from my old campaigns. For the other old schoolers out there, the 2e stat blocks should be easy to convert to OSRIC, AD&D 1e, Swords and Wizardry or Labyrinth Lord.

Until next time,
Christian

THE RATS IN MADAME PRIVETT'S CELLAR

ad&d 2e

The party stands in the cramped office of a minor town official. The official, Holdridge, sits behind a desk, which is crowded with stacks of papers and ledgers. He is about 50, graying and has a rather disinterested expression on his face. An average-looking man with his right arm in a sling stands in the corner behind the official.

Without prompting, the man exclaims, "It was huge, the size of a small dog at least!"

The official at the desk looks slightly annoyed, then addresses the party. "He's referring to the massive rat he encountered in Madame Privett's cellar."

"It bit my arm! I swear the healer who attended to me pulled out three teeth the size of my ring finger."

Interrupting the man with the sling, the official begins to speak. "There was no evidence of that, Mesfin. Now you're just scaring these fine specialists, who we have hired to look into the matter."

"Well fine, then," says Mesfin. "If I'm not needed here, then I'll just be going home." Before exiting, he pauses at the door, looks at the party and says, "I'm not lying. It was huge. Maybe I got the teeth part wrong, but it was big."

Introduction

The party (1st or 2nd level characters) has arrived in the town of Gisselin. Low on funds, they have answered an ad calling for specialists to deal with a problem that exceeds the abilities of the local rat catchers to handle, yet beyond the scope of operations of the town watch. The town's garrison, of course, has other matters to deal with. This leaves the task of clearing out a nest of massive rats from Madame Privett's cellar to a motivated group of adventurers. Certainly, rat slay-

two

seven

familiar about the tunnel work. The tunnels are most likely dwarven in manufacture. At regular intervals, runes will proclaim things like, "Section XXI Inspected By Engineer Broan."

Sewer Level 3

Two wererats lurk here, ready to strike. They have readied throwing daggers and the first person down the stairs will be the target of two attacks. Initiative can be rolled after the initial surprise attack is launched.

Wererats (Liam and Skar): AC: 6, Movement: 12, Hit Dice: 3+1, Hit Points: 13 and 16, THAC0: 17, No. of Attacks: 1, Damage/Attack: longsword (1d8), Special Attacks: none, Special Defenses: Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons, XP Value: 270.

Please see the Monstrous Manual for more information regarding wererats.

Because the party is low level, it is unlikely that they will have magic weapons. If the wererats notice this, they will attack the party until they have chiseled away at the PCs' hit points. When the party is near death, the wererats will suddenly stop fighting.

They will step back and both will address the party in quiet, rasping voices. They speak in unison, adding to the creepiness of the situation.

"Be gone from this place and remember that we could have killed you. Tell the other surface dwellers that you killed a pack of rats, but encountered nothing else. If you fail to keep our secret, we will hunt you down and kill you, in addition to the widow. We did not mean to tunnel into her cellar. We will repair the damage, provided you keep our secret."

The wererat pair are fleeing the destruction of their nest. A dangerous creature (to be revealed in a later installment) attacked their home and these wererats are the only survivors. They want to be left alone and are hopeful that the party will keep their secret. They figure that if they kill the PCs, then more surface dwellers are bound to come.

If, however, the PCs slay the wererats, they will claim their treasure, which consists of 150 gp, and a 200 gp gem. Behind the rats is a tunnel that they have blocked with brick, rocks and other detritus from

After the battle, or after the stairs collapse (or both), Madame Privett will open the door, peek her head in and ask if everyone is alright and if anyone needs more tea.

An investigation of the cellar will reveal a hole in the north wall. It appears as if someone has bashed in the wall and removed the bricks to reveal a short tunnel. (A dwarf or gnome character can tell that the hole was made from someone tunneling into the cellar.)

Giant Rat: AC: 7, Movement: 12, Hit Dice: 1/2, Hit Points: 3, THAC0: 20, No. of Attacks: 1, Damage/Attack: 1-3, Special Attacks: Disease, XP: 15.

Any character bitten by a rat has a 5% chance per wound inflicted of contracting a serious disease unless a saving throw versus Poison is made.

Sewer Level 1

The sewer beyond the cellar is a 5' wide, 6' high tunnel. The water that runs along the floor is only a few inches deep, but it smells terrible. Iron bars block both ends of the tunnel. It will be completely dark here unless the party provides a source of illumination.

Along the southern wall is another pile of brick and mortar rubble. Again, it appears as if someone or something has tunneled its way out. A small space beyond reveals a hole in the floor with a wooden ladder going down.

Sewer Level 2

The tunnels here are similar to the ones above. The sewer branches off to the left and right, before intersections are reached. Irons bars block further passage, but in two tunnels, the bars have been pried apart. The room beyond the pried open bars is home to five rats (hp 3 each), who are ready to pounce! Like the rats above, they will fight until the end.

Laying in the middle of the floor is a dead dog. He has been chewed on quite a bit, so the sight is rather unsettling.

Once again, a crumbling wall reveals a small room with a ladder leading down into the blackness. Near the entrance to the small room with the ladder are a pick and an iron crowbar, which lean against the wall.

At this point, a dwarf or gnome character may notice something

six

ing isn't the most glamorous work, but the 5 gp reward for each character will be helpful.

The party will be given directions to Madame Privett's house and a basic set of guidelines. Under no circumstance is the party allowed to use fire or explosive, area effect spells. The town officials want the rats—not a city block—destroyed.

Madame Privett's Home

Madame Privett, who is about 45, is a widow. Her husband was a fisherman who owned and operated several small vessels. He disappeared on the lake about three years ago. Madame Privett is grateful for the party's arrival and will offer them tea and cake before showing them to the cellar door.

She confesses that she rarely ventures into the cellar because the stairs are rickety and the lighting poor. She will tell the party that a few weeks ago, she heard a loud banging coming from below. She alerted the town watch about the noise, but it took them a while to respond. When they finally did, they went into the cellar and quickly emerged, alarmed at the size and number of massive rats lurking downstairs. The rat catchers were then summoned and, well, here we are now.

Before the party ventures below, she will ask them to keep an eye out for her dog. He ran downstairs with the rat catchers and hasn't come back. She is terribly worried.

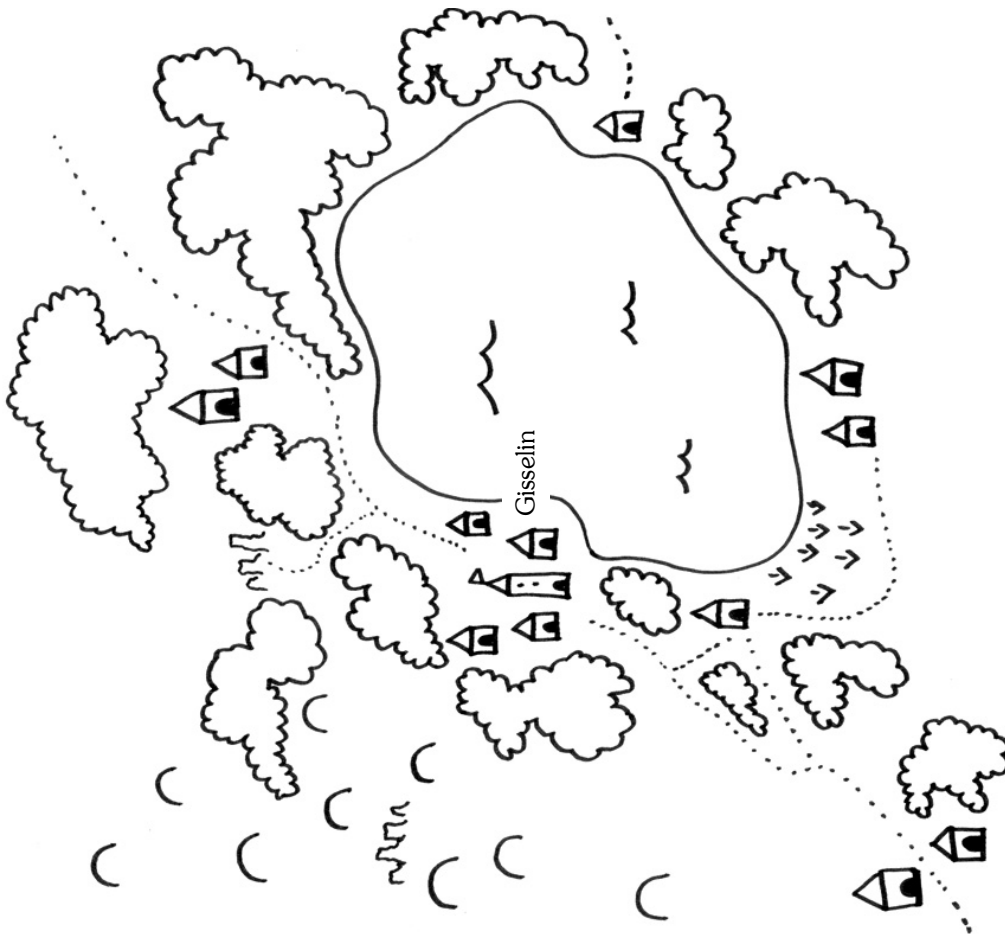
The Cellar

The cellar is dusty, dirty and smells of sewage and wet animal fur. Hardly a pleasant bouquet of aromas. Madame Privett was right about the stairs. They are in a terrible state of disrepair. They can only accommodate one human-sized creature at a time. If two or more individuals attempt to navigate the stairs, there is a 40% chance they will collapse. The resulting fall will result in d6 damage.

The cellar is cluttered with boxes and various odds and ends. When the party descends the stairs—either by foot or on their backs—they will be attacked by two giant rats (3 hp each). The rats are aggressive and will fight until the death. (You can find the stat block on page six.)

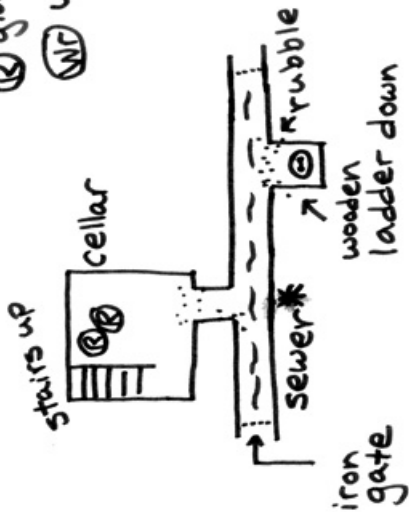
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The Town of Gisselin and its Environs

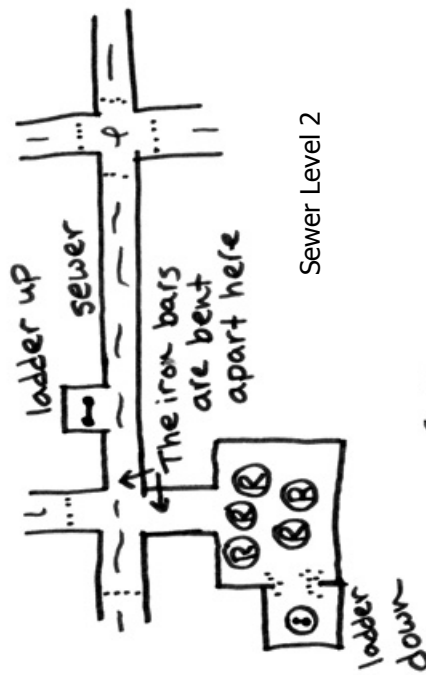


Madame Privett's Cellar and the Sewers Beyond

② giant rat
WIR were rat



Cellar and Sewer Level 1



Sewer Level 2



Sewer Level 3

Iridia

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Notes

ON POINT

What a difference a week makes. When last I wrote, I indicated that I was having a hell of a time finding people for my Friday night Labyrinth Lord campaign. Out of nowhere, five (and possibly six) people expressed an interest. We had our first session on March 6th and it was a lot of fun. The session was very educational in terms of scheduling and mechanics.

Scheduling-wise, I will have to change the structure and format of my adventures. Los Angeles, like any city with a few million inhabitants, is a beast to navigate during rush hour. Even though I set a gather time for 6pm and a start time of 6:30, we didn't get going until almost 7:30. And then people cancelled at the last minute. One poor guy, who showed up on time at 6, had to wait an hour and a half to play!

To work with this, I am going to move to a site-based, mini-episodic format. The campaign will take place in and around the Freecity of Haldane, which I presented in Iridia 87. During a session, which lasts from 6:30 to 9:30, I will plan not one, but two, adventures. Each mini-adventure can be completed in about an hour and a half of play. This should accommodate people who arrive on time and those who can't make it until later. If we find ourselves in the fortunate situation where everyone can make it at 6:30, then we'll embark upon something more substantial.

Rule-wise, I really enjoyed running Labyrinth Lord for the first time. The encumbrance rules really seem to encourage the use of hirelings to carry your gear. Also, the starting money for PCs results in rather low armor classes, since they can't afford more expensive metal armor. I found that combat was rather lethal. PCs really need to use careful tactics so as to not draw too many attacks. Finally, I liked the loose combat rules. I found that little things, like morale checks, provided opportunities for role-playing. I think I am really onto something as I attempt to employ LL as a rules-light fantasy rpg instead of an old school hack and slash engine. I don't know about you, but I think slogging it out for months in a row in a mega-dungeon is deadly dull.

Until next time,

Christian

THE ABANDONED SHRINE OF WEYOUN THE WANDERER

labyrinth lord

Introduction

This adventure can be used as a random wilderness encounter for 1st to 3rd level characters. It requires little preparation prior to play and can be customized to fit most medieval-fantasy campaign settings. Although written for the Labyrinth Lord rules from Goblinoid Games, it is easily converted to Swords and Wizardry, AD&D 1e and 2e, as well as Basic D&D.

Background

In this adventure, the party will seek shelter in a roadside shrine that has fallen into a state of near-ruin. The clerics who tended to the shrine were slain one tragic afternoon by a violent group of adventurers. The spirit of the chief cleric still haunts the shrine. If the party refrains from looting the shrine, they may be able to earn the good will of the shrine's deity by eventually hunting down and bringing the murderers to justice. The shrine is currently inhabited by four bandits and a group of kobolds.

Start

"Your characters are being pelted by rain and hail. Fortunately, you see a building up ahead. Perhaps it can offer warmth and shelter?"

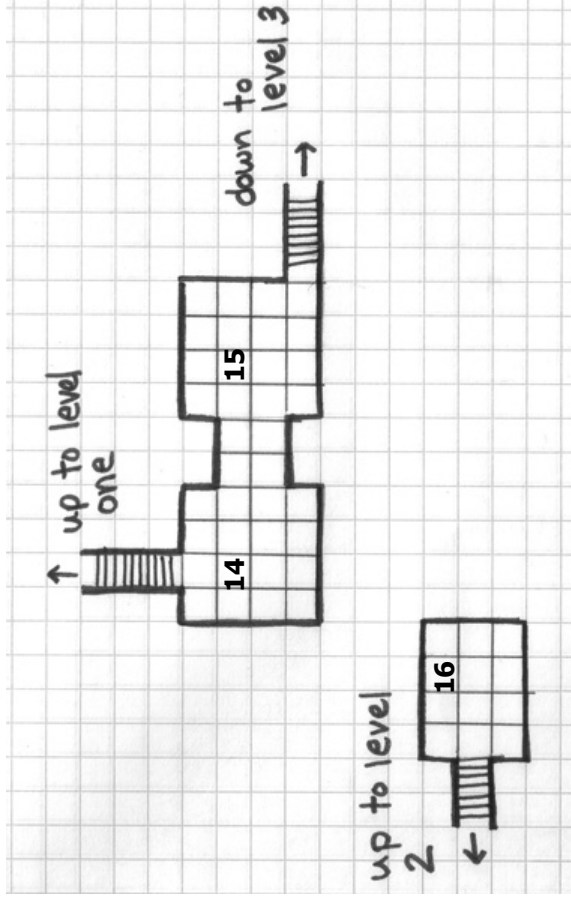
As the party approaches the single story, stone building, they notice a large, stone wagon wheel in front of the edifice. Around the wheel is inscribed, "The road is home to all." Players will recognize the wheel as the holy symbol of Weyoun the Wanderer. Feel free to read the following to the party:

The patron saint of travelers, wanderers and itinerants, Weyoun is a

two

fifteen

Dungeon Levels 2 and 3



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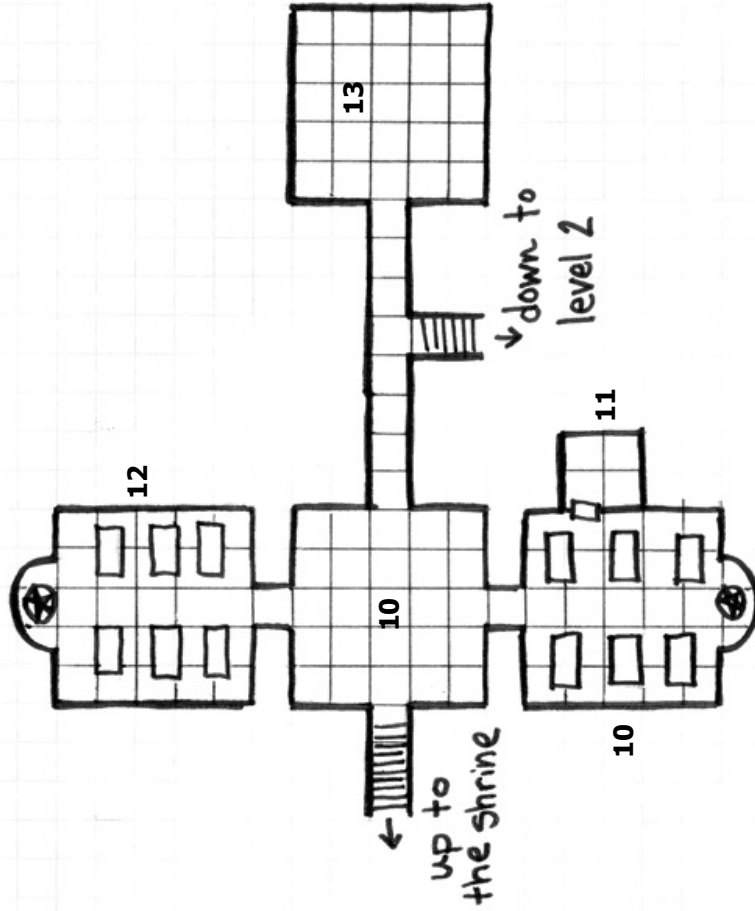
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Dungeon Level 1



friend to anyone who calls the road home. His followers have built roadside shrines and way stations that provide secure shelter, as well as a place to replenish supplies and to trade news of the road. Many of the shrines are in rather remote areas, which makes them vulnerable to banditry and monster predation. Judging by the shabby nature of the building – shutters dangle from rusted shingles and large holes appear in the roof – perhaps this shrine has fallen upon hard times.

If the party is reluctant to enter, perhaps more prodding is required.

"The hail stones are increasing in size. While the structure looks a little run-down, perhaps it is better than being pelted by stinging ice?"

The Shrine

The shrine is a single-storey construction with stone walls and a timber roof. The walls are in good shape, but the roof is showing signs of neglect. If the party looks around, they will notice various animal and humanoid tracks around the building. A successful Hear Noise check will alert the party that someone is just inside the main door. (Humans will be successful on a 1 on a 1d6, demi-humans on a 1-2 on a 1d6 and Thieves should consult the table that summarizes their abilities.)

Wandering Monsters

The only wandering beastie the party will encounter is an ogre. The creature has wandered down from a nearby mountain and is looking for food. This is a planned encounter, and will only occur on the morning following the party spending the night at the shrine or upon exiting the final encounter in room 17.

The ogre would like to take over the shrine and convert it into his "palace." The party can evade the monster, fight it themselves or perhaps team up with the brigands in room 1 to defeat it more easily.

Ogre; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 90' (30'), AC: 5, Hit Dice: 4+1, Hit Points: 26, Attacks: 1 (club), Damage: 1d10, Save: F4, Morale: 10, XP Value: 140.

The ogre has 250 gp in a sack, along with three skins of wine, a lamb (alive) and a blanket.

Keyed Entries

1) Hall of Worship

This room appears to have once been a place of worship, judging by the pews and altar. In the NW corner is a statue. There are two doors in the north wall. In the middle of the room, four rough-looking men curse and shove one another as they try to manage flint, steel and damp tinder.

Before the shrine fell to ruin, this chapel was used by travelers to say prayers to Weyoun in the hopes of a safe passage and speedy journey. Currently, four bandits are present, trying to light a fire. They are currently on the run and are erratic as a result of being under stress for so long. Therefore, roll on the Monster Reaction Table to determine the bandits' reaction. Although they may not initially attack the group (let the dice fall where they may), they will carefully eye the party, waiting for an opportunity to turn PC disadvantage into NPC advantage.

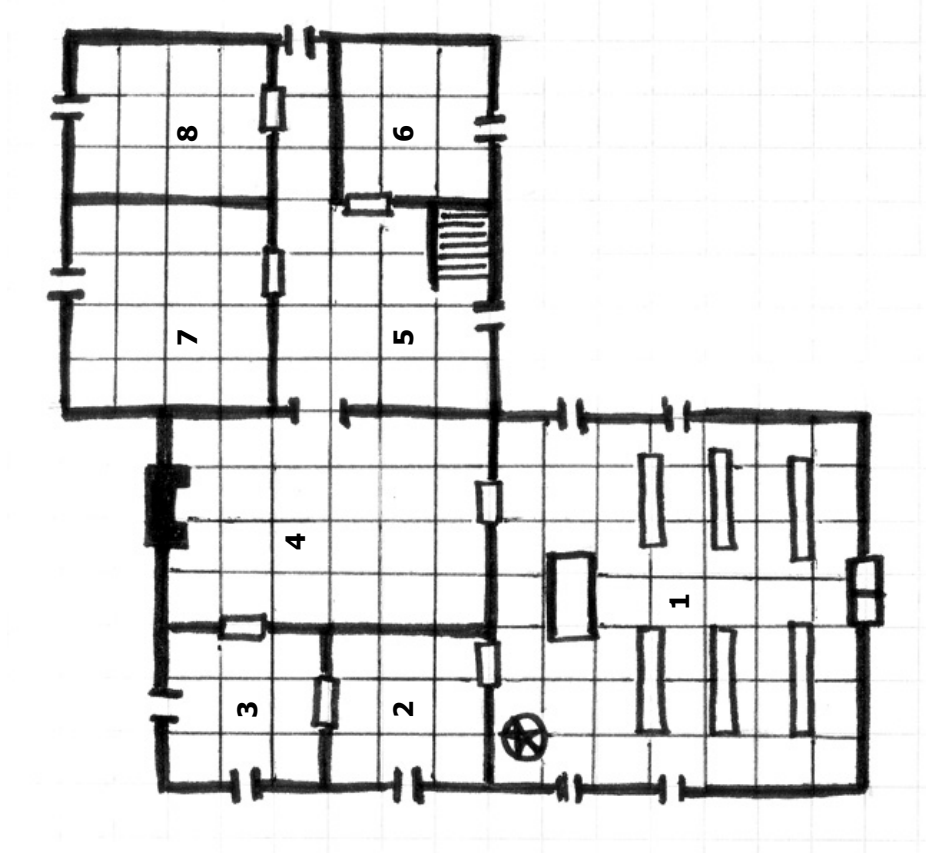
If the bandits survive their encounter with the PCs, it might be interesting to have them return at a later date. Their names are Nix, Thornley, Tad and Gil. Nix is their leader. He is cocky, condescending and quite the conniver. The bandits are hiding out after a recent crime and will linger in the shrine for three days before departing. They have no desire to battle the kobolds and will stay in this room.

There is little of value here. The pews and altar are full of termites. The statue in the NW corner is a depiction of Weyoun. It presents him as a bearded man in his 40s, with a weathered face and knowing eyes. Interestingly, it has not succumbed to rot nor termites.

Nix, Thornley, Tad and Gil; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 120' (40'), AC: 8 (padded armor), Hit Dice: 1, Hit Points: 5 each, Attacks: 1, Damage: dagger (d4) or short sword (d6), Save: F1, Morale: 8, XP Value: 10 each.

The men's loot consists of a bottle of rum, some blankets, a woman's undergarments and 12 gp.

Maps of the Shrine



Ground Floor

If the party has not defiled any of the sarcophagi, the following will occur:

Within moments of the party's arrival, a magical darkness will close in upon them. It cannot be penetrated by torches, lanterns, infravision nor magical light. One by one, the faces of the three adventurers who killed the servants of Weyoun will appear in the darkness. As each face appears, a haunting voice will whisper their names. The three faces and names are:

Rafe: a small, thin man, with a shaved head.

Kallas: a long-haired, bearded warrior with a scar on his forehead

Mendalin: a stern-looking woman with long blonde hair

As the last face fades, the same haunting voice will say, "Avenge us..."

If the party has looted any of the sarcophagi, the darkness will close in and they will see the faces of the murderers before them. However, they will also see their own faces and will instead hear the words, "We will be avenged..."

Concluding the Adventure

If the party looted the shrine without shame, be sure to enforce the curse described in room 10. Conversely, if the characters restrained themselves, then some boon should come to them. Perhaps they will encounter a cleric of Weyoun, who will heal them for free. Somehow he knows of their selfless deeds. When asked how he knows, the cleric will say something cryptic like, "Followers of Weyoun always know what happens on the road."

Be sure to have the party encounter the foul adventurers (Rafe, Kallas and Mendalin) who murdered the clerics. The meeting might take place in a week or a year, but their paths should cross. It will – of course – be up to the PCs how they respond. If any of the brigands (Nix, Thornley, Tad or Gil) survived contact with the party, they should be encountered in the future, too.

2) Changing Room and Clerk's Office

Dusty, moth-infested clerical vestments hang from pegs in the wall. A battered desk sits below a window in the west wall. There is a door in the north wall.

This room was used as a changing room by the shrine's cleric and acolytes. It also served as a clerk's office. If the party searches the desk, they will find a holy symbol of Weyoun.

3) Cleric's Office

This room is cold and damp. Rain is being driven through the open windows in the north and west walls. Skeletal remains lay on the floor near an open door in the east wall.

If the party searches the remains, they will see that it has a holy symbol around its neck. The remains are those of the lead cleric of the shrine. He was attacked in the room to the east and crawled in here to die. The cleric's spirit still haunts the shrine. It manifests itself in a variety of ways that will be described later in this adventure.

TRANSMISSIONS FROM PIPER

Sometimes you must look to the past, to see the future.

Inspired by the writings of one of Science Fiction's master writers, H. Beam Piper, Thousand Suns: Transmissions from Piper, is a collection of new rules and ideas ready to be dropped into your Thousand Suns games!

**Coming March 2009 from Rogue Games, Inc.
www.rogue-games.net/tspiper.html**

4) Common Room

It's cold here. A chill is felt in your bones and you feel ill at ease. A long table sits in the middle of the room. Upon it rests a skeleton clad in rusted armor. Scattered about the floor are three additional skeletons. There is a fireplace in the north wall, a door in the west and south walls and an open hallway in the east wall. A few broken weapons and dark stains on the floor attest to a fierce fight.

The three skeletons on the floor are wearing rotting clothes and possess holy symbols of Weyoun. They were once acolytes, who assisted the cleric in the adjacent room. On the table are the remains of a warrior, who was brought to the temple by his three adventuring companions. The man was slain by a wyvern and his friends brought him here to be resurrected.

When the cleric of the shrine explained that such magic was beyond his ability, the adventurers grew increasingly furious. Already beside themselves with grief, the two men and a woman lashed out. Within a few moments, the four holy men who tended to the shrine were killed. In the three years since, the shrine has steadily decayed.

5) Kobold Sentries

As you enter this room, you note a flight of stairs descending into the darkness along the south wall. Standing near the stairs and eyeing you with red, angry eyes are three, dog-like humanoid. They yip in anger while clutching their spears.

The kobolds are hostile and will immediately attack. They will fight for one round before fleeing down the stairs.

Kobolds; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 60' (20'), AC: 7, Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points, Hit Points: 2 each, Attacks: 1, Damage: spear (d4), Save: 0 level human, Morale: 6, XP Value: 5 each.

6) Cleric's Chambers

This room appears to have been a bedroom. There is a fireplace in the east wall and a moldy mattress in the middle of the floor. A hole in the roof is allowing a steady stream of water to pour in.

Yellow Mold; AL: Neutral, Movement: 0, AC: always hit, Hit Dice: 2, Hit Points: 7, Attacks: spores, Damage: 1d6, special, Save: F2, Morale: Not applicable, XP Value: 29.

Yellow mold typically covers an area of 10 square feet. It does not move or attack, but if it is touched it is acidic and destroys leather and wood; it deals 1d6 points of damage to bare flesh.

There is a 50% probability that any time yellow mold is contacted, it ejects spores into a 10' cube area. Any creature inside the area is required to roll a saving throw versus poison, and failure indicates suffocation and death in 6 rounds. Yellow mold is impervious to all attacks except from fire, and a torch can burn mold for 1d4 hit points of damage per strike.

Dungeon Level 3

16) The Apparition

A chill grips your chest as you descend the steps. Suddenly, you see a figure ahead that you swear wasn't there an instant ago. He stands just at the edge of your torchlight and is dressed in clerical vestments. He looks at you for a moment, then continues down the stairs. Just as he leaves your torchlight, you are astonished to see that he is not walking, but gliding!

The party has just seen the ghost of the slain cleric in room 3. His spirit often settles in this deepest level of the shrine. The kobolds never come here because they are disturbed by the ghost's presence.

17) Cellar

This room is dark and cold. The light of your torches (or lanterns) seems muted. The darkness is clearly unnatural and you sense it is slowly closing in upon you.

The spirit of the slain cleric lingers in the shrine, waiting for the opportunity to whisper the name of his killers into sympathetic ears. As mentioned above, his spirit often resides here, where it is darkest and most quiet.

Dungeon Level 2

14) Panicked Kobolds

Six more of the fiendish, dog-like humanoids stand in the middle of the room, spears and bows at the ready. In their eyes you see a mixture of fear and anger.

A group of kobolds were exploring this room, looking for hidden treasure, when the battle broke out in area 9. They decided to hide here, fearful of joining the battle. They would rather not fight and will flee the shrine if the PCs allow.

Kobolds; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 60' (20'), AC: 7, Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points, Hit Points: 2 each, Attacks: 1, Damage: spear (d4) or short bow (d4), Save: 0 level human, Morale: 6, XP Value: 5 each.

15) Dangerous Mold

The rotting corpse of a human lays slumped in the corner. Growing from its mouth, eyes and ears is a thick, yellow mold. The mold has grown down the torso and is spreading onto the floor. Another dog-like creature lies dead nearby, a similar-looking mold choking its mouth and nostrils. The little creature clutches a belt pouch in its right hand.

The yellow mold is, coincidentally, a Yellow Mold. The dead kobold tried to loot the corpse's belt pouch and succumbed to the toxic spores. The body belongs to that of a human traveler, who was suffering from a rare disease he contracted elsewhere. He sought shelter in the shrine and crawled down here to die. The pouch contains 2d12 gp. If the party wishes to secure the woolen belt pouch, the mold will need to be burned away.

There is nothing of value in this room. The party will find a broken lute, though. The clerics of Weyoun are similar to Bards from Dungeons and Dragons. They often make a living from entertaining while on the road. Some clerics find that their spell casting is enhanced through the playing of a musical instrument.

7 & 8) Empty Rooms

This damp room is littered with broken wood that may have been chairs and shelves. There are a few broken urns and few rotting mattresses.

There is nothing of value in either of these rooms.

Dungeon Level 1

9) Landing

Four dog-like creatures yip and snarl in the middle of this room. [If any kobolds from area 5 survived, they will be found here.] There are hallways to the north, east and south. You can hear more yipping and snarling from the south.

The kobolds will attack with spears or short bows. After one round of combat, five kobolds from room 10 will charge into the room and join the fray. If the kobolds fail a morale check, they will flee down the east hallway and cower in room 13.

Kobolds; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 60' (20'), AC: 7, Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points, Hit Points: 2 each, Attacks: 1, Damage: spear (d4) or short bow (d4), Save: 0 level human, Morale: 6, XP Value: 5 each.

10) Sarcophagi and Kobold Lair

This room features six stone sarcophagi. There is a statue in an alcove in the south wall and a door in the east wall. The room smells as if animals have been living here for some time.

The kobolds use this room as their sleeping quarters. The floor is littered with sleeping mats, scraps of food and small piles of waste. The kobolds' treasure of 4d6 x 10 cp will be found in a sack in a corner.

If the party attempts to remove the lid from a sarcophagus, the un-

dead spirit of the slain cleric in room 3 will make its presence felt. One character at random will feel an icy, firm grip on his shoulder and a haunting, "Noooo." in his ear. The spirit is not visible and no other character will hear the ghostly sound. Other than the firm reminder to not violate the sarcophagi, the spirit will not hamper the party's tomb robbing.

Because Weyoun is a god of the road and of travelers, any character who violates a tomb will be cursed in a manner keeping in line with the deity's ethos. For each sarcophagus opened, one malady will befall them while on the road. A character's horse might run away, they might become lost, they could be robbed or attract wandering monsters. A cleric of Weyoun will recognize a cursed character and might offer to lift the curse if some act of contrition is completed.

The sarcophagi contain the bodies of former clerics and notable champions of Weyoun's church. Each sarcophagus will contain random treasure. Please consult the table below.

Random Treasure (roll a d12)

- 1-2: d10 gp
- 3-4: 2d10 gp
- 5-6: 20 gp gem
- 7-8: 2 x 20 gp gems
- 9-10: 50 gp gem
- 11: Scroll with 1st level magic-user spell. (GM will determine spell.) Duplicate rolls will result in a gold ring worth 5 gp.
- 12: +1 shield. Duplicate rolls will result in a rusted sword or helm.

The statue in the alcove shows a kind-faced man in traveling clothes. He looks similar to the figure in the hall of worship (room 1), but this statue is strumming a lute. In the alcove behind him, a scene has been carved to illustrate a winding road and rolling hills.

11. Giant Rat Pen

The door opens and out rush 5 giant rats! They are massive creatures, nearly 3' in length. Their beady eyes stare at you hungrily and their spiked leather collars hint at their training as attack beasts.

The rats were trained by the kobolds to attack any non-kobold on sight. This empty room is their pen. The room is filthy and stinks of rat and excrement. If the party listened at the door before opening, they may have heard the rats clawing to get out! (Because the rats are so

eight

aggressive, the GM should subtract 1 from the die roll when the PCs attempt to listen.)

Giant Rats; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 120' (40'), AC: 7, Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points, Hit Points: 3 each, Attacks: 1, Damage: 1d3, disease, Save: F1, Morale: 8, XP Value: 6 each.

Please see the Labyrinth Lord manual for details of the disease the rats carry.

12) Sarcophagi and Ruttng Kobolds

Two kobolds cower in fear from behind a sarcophagus at the far end of this room. They are not dressed and unarmed. The room smells of sweat, urine and hot, kobold love. [The urine may or may not be related to the kobolds' love making. GM's choice.]

This pair of kobolds slipped into this room to couple. When the fight broke out in area 9, they cowered in fear. If attacked, they will attempt to flee upstairs to the shrine. There are six sarcophagi and another statue similar to the one in room 10. If the party decides to plunder the resting places of the dead, refer to the random treasure table for the room 10 entry. There will not be another creepy voice warning the party against such action, but the same curse will still apply.

Kobolds; AL: Chaotic, Movement: 60' (20'), AC: 7, Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points, Hit Points: 2 each, Attacks: 1, Damage: spear (d4) or short bow (d4), Save: 0 level human, Morale: 6, XP Value: 5 each.

13) Ossuary

Small, wooden boxes line the walls of this room. Many of the boxes have succumbed to rot and their skeletal contents have begun spilling out onto the floor. [If any kobolds fled from area 9, they will be found here, hiding behind the wood boxes.]

Other than any stray coppers that the kobolds might have in their possession, there is nothing of value in this room.

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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

On Friday night (03.13) my friend Rod came by and we played the second session of our Labyrinth Lord campaign. It was a solo session due to last minute cancellations, but we had a really fun time nonetheless. The rules remain easy to use and I believe that they facilitate increased role-play and immersion in the game.

I've had to add story awards to compensate for the low experience rewards earned for killing 1 HD beasts. This has worked out really well. Because experience points are awarded for role-playing and accomplishing an objective, I don't need to worry so much about combat and placing enough treasure to ensure level advancement. If you want to track our progress, you can visit iridiazine.net/windingpath.htm.

In Iridia 92 I wrote a brief scenario for AD&D 2e. (I ran this adventure on 03.13 and it went very well.) The scenario was set in a town called Gisselin (gi-sell-in). I've decided to use the town in my Labyrinth Lord game and have mapped it out. In this issue I will present the map, as well as some pertinent details that might facilitate its use during play.

Until next time,
Christian

The Town of Gisselin

labyrinth lord

Overview

The town of Gisselin lies next to a large freshwater lake. The town supports a mostly human population of 3,500. Among the nonhumans are a contingent of halflings that have taken over an entire block. They pay their taxes and are law-abiding, so their human neighbors don't mind. Well, at least not much.

Gisselin is governed by Mayor Griffin Barbour (Magic User 3). A student of the arcane, Mayor Barbour is often criticized for being more interested in magic than, say, ensuring that visiting farmers pay a fair tariff for bringing produce to market. Mayor Barbour dismisses this criticism as petty and narrow-minded.

The citizens of Gisselin pride themselves on their independence. Many of the town's current inhabitants are descendants of hearty explorers who came to the area looking for free land. While the average resident of the town believes in personal freedom, he also understands the need for public safety. As a result, citizens and visitors are not permitted to wear armor of any kind nor bear any weapon larger than a dagger. There are special circumstances in which these rules do not apply. For example, warehouse guards or individuals acting on town business are exempted.

Many of Gisselin's citizens earn a living from fishing or tending to large pens of mussels where freshwater pearls are cultured. Hunting and farming in the nearby woods also provides employment to some of the residents.

Legends, Rumors and Lore

Visitors to Gisselin may learn the following bits of history and lore during their stay:

1) Gisselin is protected by a sturdy wall that the locals believe is inhabited by a powerful earth elemental. If this elemental exists, perhaps it finds the stones and mortar to its liking. While no confirmed sighting of the elemental has ever been reported, curious footprints have been found that add credence

to the tale.

What the citizens don't know is that Mayor Barbour arranged for the elemental to be summoned and bound to the town's wall. The conjurer who performed the summoning demanded a steep fee. The mayor paid the fee out of his own private funds in an effort to keep his beloved home better protected.

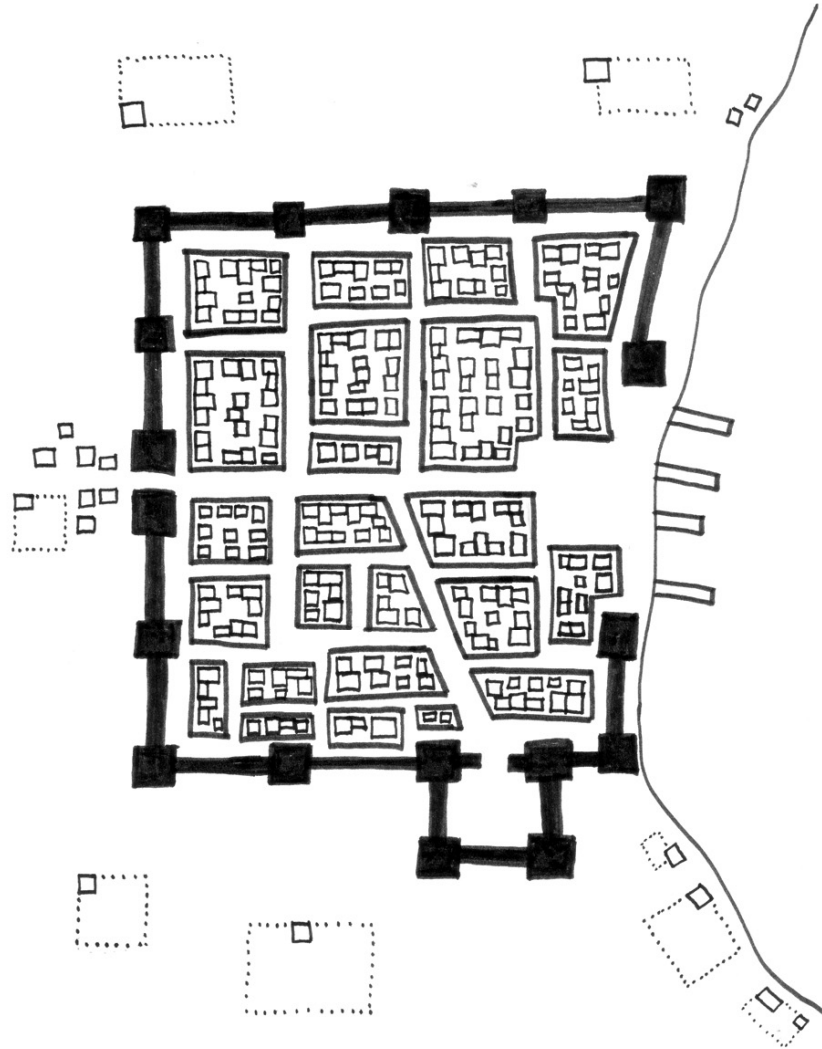
2) The town's sewers were dug by dwarven engineers. Overzealous in their efforts, the dwarves created a network of tunnels and chambers far beyond the needs of the town. Angry at the cost overruns, the town refused to pay the full amount owed to the dwarves. The dwarves responded by sealing off many of the chambers, trapping others and refusing to turn over a complete map of the tunnel network.

3) A race of "fishmen" lives in the lake. They are intelligent, but are not friendly towards the town. Occasional skirmishes erupt between fishermen and the aquatic natives. This often occurs when one of the fishmen is accidentally caught in one of the fishermen's nets.

The creatures have lived in the lake since long before the area was settled. They dwell in a series of underwater caves and caverns. Alarmed at the growing numbers of fishermen on their lake, they occasionally lash out.

Adventures in Gisselin

"The Rats in Madame Privett's Cellar" (see Iridia 92) is set in the town. I decided that the wererats in the adventure had traveled north and settled in Gisselin's expansive sewers. While exploring tunnels that emptied into the lake, the wererats encountered some of the fishmen. All of the wererats, save the two encountered in the adventure, were dragged into the lake and drowned.



Ander Haug, Hendrick Linhart and Nells Ruud – Werewolf, Hybrid Form; Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger); CR 3; HD 1d8+1 plus 2d8+6; hp 21; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AL CE;

Armor: AC 16 (+2 dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +4;

Melee: Claw +4 (1d4+2) or Bite +5 (1d6+3).

Full Attack:

Melee: 2 claws +4 (1d4+2) and bite +0 (1d6+1).

Special Attacks: Curse of Lycanthropy.

Special Qualities: Alternate form, wolf empathy, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 15 (+2), Con 16 (+3), Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8 (-1).

Languages: Can communicate with wolves and dire wolves.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +1, Hide +6, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Spot +1, Survival +2 (+4 racial bonus when tracking by scent); Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stealthy, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

Possessions: None.

ON POINT

California's crappy economy has now afflicted the humble Iridia zine. My employer notified me on Friday, March 13 that my services were no longer needed. A 10 year career has come to an end. Thanks for your service, now GTFO. They were nice enough to offer me temp work at a 70% reduction in pay. Sadly, I can make more money on unemployment, but that's not really an option. *sigh*

In happier news, I've been able to play a few more sessions of Labyrinth Lord. I really enjoy the loose combat rules. I maintain that they actually facilitate role-play because the GM has opportunities to describe the action in great detail. We used hirelings for the first time and it worked out great.

It's neat to see the NPCs assume unique personalities. One of the henchmen, Edward the Fisherman, is hoping to earn enough money to start a business. He figures that he needs 300 gp. Each time Edward earns a few coins, he takes out a piece of parchment and makes tally marks. As soon as he hits his goal, he will start his business and will forever be an ally of the party.

This month I have a new GURPS beastie inspired by a student drawing, as well as the insane number of foreclosures in the state. The monster fits in well with a series of modern/near future robots, monsters and NPCs that I've presented in previous issues. It'd be fun to run a monster hunters campaign set in modern day LA. I'd just need to figure out a good group template and the damn thing would pretty much write itself. Issues of LA Weekly could be mined for all kinds of nifty NPCs and locations.

Playing in a bi-weekly Werewolf the Apocalypse campaign has inspired me to approach the game from a D&D 3.5 point of view. I think it'd be great to run a World of Darkness style campaign with the D&D rules. Therefore, I present a hideout for a group of caravan guards afflicted with lycanthropy. They live in a rundown building in Traft, which lays along the shores of Lake Quag in Greyhawk. I've written several articles that were placed in and around Traft, so this will hopefully be a nice addition to the series.

Until next time,
Christian

THE COYOTE MAN

gurps 4e

Valencia is a planned community in Los Angeles County. Depending upon who you talk to, it's either a quiet bedroom community with well-landscaped yards or it's a burning hot pit of despair, full of middle to upper-class rednecks. Regardless of how you feel about the home of Six Flags Magic Mountain, Valencia has been hit by a wave of foreclosures. Many homes now lay vacant. The lawns have all died, tumbleweeds roll down the streets and coyotes openly roam some neighborhoods.

Since the city is surrounded by an arid landscape, the coyotes aren't too uncommon. New to the ecology, however, is a creature that is being called the "Coyote Man." Noticed first by children, and later by squatters in some of the abandoned homes, the Coyote Man is a monster, simply put. The creature hunts vacant lots and devours – among other things – the pets left behind by homeowners, who could no longer manage their ballooning interest only, adjustable rate mortgages.

The Coyote Man is frightening to behold. It stands nearly 8' tall and is covered in a reddish-brown fur. Four tentacle-like arms, each covered with fur and featuring sharp pincers at the end, are able to rip flesh from its victims. Two horns sprout from its dog-like head. Whether the beast is some aberration in nature or summoned from another plane of existence, the Coyote Man is starting to capture imaginations. Bloggers



The Coyote Man may lurk in the rocky wasteland on the outskirts of the city.

Ander Haug, Hendrick Linhart and Nells Ruud – Were-wolf, Human Form; Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger); CR 3; HD 1d8+1 plus 2d8+6; hp 21; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AL CE;
Armor: AC 17 (+2 natural, +4 chain shirt, +1 light shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +3;

Melee: Longsword +3 (1d8+1, 19-20/x2);

Ranged: Light Crossbow +2 (1d8, 19-20/x2).

Special Qualities: Alternate form, wolf empathy, low-light vision, scent.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 13 (+1), Dex 11, Con 12 (+1), Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8 (-1).

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +1, Hide +1, Listen +1, Move Silently +2, Spot +1, Survival +2; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stealthy, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

Possessions: Chain shirt, long sword, light shield, 20 gp.

Ander Haug, Hendrick Linhart and Nells Ruud – Were-wolf, Wolf Form; Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger); CR 3; HD 1d8+1 plus 2d8+6; hp 21; Init +6; Spd 50 ft; AL CE;
Armor: AC 16 (+2 dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14.

Attacks: Base Atk +2, Grp +4;

Melee: Bite +5 (1d6+3).

Special Attacks: Curse of Lycanthropy, trip.

Special Qualities: Alternate form, wolf empathy, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2.

Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 15 (+2), Con 16 (+3), Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8 (-1).

Languages: Can communicate with wolves and dire wolves.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +1, Hide +6, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Spot +1, Survival +2 (+4 racial bonus when tracking by scent); Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stealthy, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

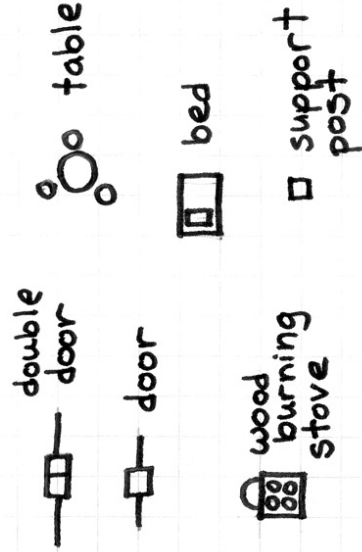
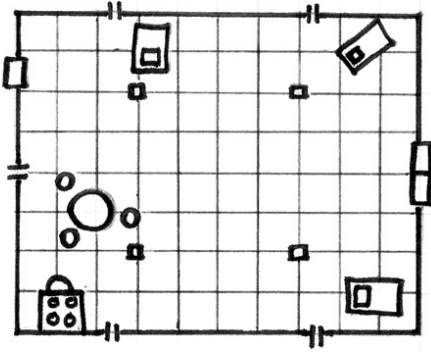
Possessions: None.

The PCs in your campaign might be the ones who are tasked with solving a rash of grisly murders in the hills above town. The party's investigation might lead them to the warehouse, where Ander, Hendrick and Nells will fight savagely. During the fight, the PCs may be infected with lycanthropy and the size of the pack will increase. Also, the werewolf lord who controls the pack that originally attacked the men's caravan still lives. He and his fellow lycanthropes might infiltrate the town, looking for their wayward cubs.

A map of the warehouse where Ander, Hendrick and Nells live is provided. It is a single-storey wood building. Sturdy padlocks (Open Locks DC 25) secure the front and back doors. The furnishings are sparse. The men sleep on three mats casually laid out on the floor. There is a table and a wood burning stove.

The warehouse is rather messy and smells like men and dogs. Tucked in a small woodpile near the stove is a box that holds 200 gp and 2 x 20 gp gems.

Other articles set in and around Traft have appeared in Iridia 4, 5, 16, 20, 57, and 58.



have posted a child's illustration of the creature and local police are on the alert for a "costumed freak hiding out in abandoned homes."

In a monster hunting game, the PCs could be intrigued by the stories. They might set out to photograph, capture or slay the Coyote Man. Or, they might be party goers taking advantage of an abandoned home. Late in the evening, after many beers, the Coyote Man attacks someone as they step out back to get some fresh air.

When designing the creature, I gave it the Secret disadvantage. In this case, the creature's existence is its secret. If it was discovered, it'd most certainly be killed. Also, I gave it the Terror advantage because this creature would be encountered in a modern-day setting. If this were a fantasy beastie, the Horrific Appearance would be sufficient to capture its horrifying presence. Finally, the creature has long arms that allow it to reach into an adjacent hex for the purpose of close combat. Its claw attacks are pretty fierce. With its high strength and four attacks, the Coyote Man would be a tough fight in melee.

Several issues of Iridia have presented NPCs, monsters or other constructs that might be useful in a monster slayers campaign. Please see Iridia 11, 19, 22, 24, 35, 62, 79, 82 and 84.

THE WEREWOLVES OF TRRAFT

world of greyhawk

Coyote Man (291 points)

SM +1 (8' tall, 425 lbs.);
ST 20 (-10%) [+180], DX 12 [40], IQ 7 [-60], HT 12 [20];
HP 20, Will 12 [25], Per 11 [15], FP 12;
Basic Lift 80, Damage: Thr 2d-1/Sw 3d+2;
Basic Speed 6.0, Basic Move 6;
Dodge 9, Parry -, Block -;
DR 1 [5].

Advantages and Perks

Ambidexterity [5], Dark Vision [25], Extra Arms (2 arms, extra flexible, long, +150%) [50], Extra Attack (x3) [75], Night Vision 5 [5], Sharp Claws [5], Sharp Teeth [1], Terror (always on, -20%) [30].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bestial [-15], Cannot Speak [-15], Ham-Fisted [-10], Horrific Appearance (-6 to reactions) [-24], Loner (6) [-10], Secret [-30].

Skills

Brawling-14 [4].

Attacks

Sharp Pincers-14, 2d+1 cut, Reach 1, Parry 10 (4/round, -3 vs. weapons other than thrusting attacks);
Bite-14, 2d cut, Reach C.

While guarding a caravan laden with iron ingots, Ander Haug, Hendrick Linhart and Nells Ruud were attacked by a pack of unusually large and ravenous wolves. The wolves tore through the caravan, seriously wounding the three men. The others in the caravan, including the drovers, horses and a few porters, were all killed. The three men soon realized that they were forever changed by the attack, each of them succumbing to lycanthropy. While Ander, Hendrick and Nells had heard stories of werewolves lurking in the highlands above Lake Quag, they never expected to encounter them first hand.

The men's first few experiences with shapeshifting were incredibly unnerving. After a full or new moon, they would awake the following day, naked, far from home and covered in blood. Nearby lay the shredded remains of an animal and once, a human. The men considered turning themselves into the authorities, but worried that they would be destroyed rather than cured.

Ander, the de facto leader, eventually convinced his friends that their affliction was a blessing and not a curse. If they could learn to control their lycanthropy and to be careful where they fed – and what they fed upon – they could live normal lives. Well, semi-normal lives.

To facilitate this, they rented an abandoned warehouse. The men could live in peace and come and go with little notice. If they felt the need to feast, they could bring home a large haunch of beef or even a live pig. When the desire to hunt was very strong, they could ride into the Sepia Uplands and run with other wolves.

Even though the plan has worked very well, it's only a matter of time before they are discovered. Perhaps a ranger might follow some curious tracks from the highlands into town. Maybe their bloodlust might overcome them and a citizen of Traft will be devoured, launching a hunt for the murderers. People who knew the men before the attack might note a change in their demeanor. Their curiosity might prove fatal.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

This issue marks the 3rd anniversary of the zine. On April 3, 2006 I decided to start writing again and 96 issues later, things seem to be going well. When I started, I had hoped to publish weekly, but that has proven to be difficult to accomplish. On average, 32 issues are published a year, so that's not too bad. This issue is rather brief and it's basically one long On Point column. My looming unemployment has really got me down, so my creativity has stalled momentarily. No worries, though. I am flush with new gaming material and will get cracking immediately. Looking forward, I think I'd like to challenge myself by writing some articles for the systems mentioned below.

Gaming Progress Report

The Friday night Labyrinth Lord game is coming to a close. It's just too tough to get people together on a Friday night. Still, I'm glad to have played three sessions. It wasn't the longest playtest, but it did give me a feel for the system.

Our bi-weekly oWoD Werewolf game underwent a serious change. Our pack – the Raking Fist – rebelled against our leader. Some of us, me included, were tortured for our insolence. In the end we managed to escape. Once on the streets, we robbed a meth lab for some fast cash, bought a VW Thing, went to Target for supplies and hit the road. We're on our way to Vegas to hopefully start a new life.

My character is a skater from San Diego named Jake. He is pretty sick of werewolf politics, vampires and the Wyrms. He wants to make some money and buy a warehouse. Inside he will build an indoor skate park and set up a few bunk beds, a microwave and a good stereo. Then he and his friends can hang out and skate. To finance this, Jake hopes to work as a body-guard. Perhaps Jake's pack will also resort to more crime. Surely there are some wealthy criminals in Las Vegas we can raid.

As we've gamed, there is something that is really bothering me. I am guilty of the crime I will describe. I just want to state that up front. And here it is: laptops. I hate laptops at the game table. Ha-ha-hate. Instead of focusing on play, plotting with fellow gamers or re-viewing the rulebook, people are checking e-mail, watching YouTube videos, facebooking, etc. It pisses me off. The laptops take up a lot of space and I feel that I'm at a LAN party instead of an rpg session. The next time I run a game, I will assign xp awards to people who turn off their damn computers and focus on play.



My werewolf character wants his own indoor skate park.

Happy Birthday To Me!

It was my birthday recently, so some friends and relatives hooked me up with a few gift cards. Knowing that I was unlikely to receive another boon with unemployment on the way, I decided to buy a few books. I rarely go to the FLGS, but rpgs called to me! I had money to spend in my hot little hands.

First, I picked up Hunter: The Vigil (nWoD). I've been playing in a Werewolf: The Apocalypse (oWoD) game and am starting to come around to the World of Darkness. I'm not a big fan of dice pools, but the setting is amazing in its detail and mood. I didn't realize at the time that I needed to buy The World Of Darkness Rulebook. I thought that a \$35 book would have rules for char gen and combat,

but I was wrong. Dammit! Still, I find myself growing increasingly fond of the Storyteller system and regret some of my earlier notions of the play style. "Feh! Stupid goths and emo pukes!"

Inspired by an issue of Switching to Guns by Matt Borselli, I purchased Changeling: The Lost, also for the nWoD. It's a gorgeous book and I think it'd be a lot of fun to build NPCs. If I ever run a Hunter campaign, perhaps the hunter cell could investigate the fey. Or vice versa.

Next up was the Ravenloft setting for D&D 3.0. I never really got to run a Ravenloft campaign, save for a single session experiment. I'd love to take a stab at it someday. I think I would ask all of the players to run human Warriors or Commoners, just so we could simulate the gothic horror theme a bit better. I dunno, I've never liked elves and dwarves in my nightmares. "I'm not afraid of a vampire! I'm an 8th level dwarf fighter with 75 hit points! Rargh!" It kills the mood for me, I guess.

Still on a roll, I bagged Shadowrun 4e. A friend suggested that we start a Shadowrun game. His idea is that he'd start things rolling. After a few sessions, we would then share the mantle of GM. We could rotate, which would allow anyone interested a chance to run a game, as well as giving the GMs the opportunity to play. I hope it works out.

Finally, I bought the D&D 3.5 Rules Compendium. I have a love/hate relationship with 3.5. On the one hand, it has a pile of rules and combat at higher levels can bog. Conversely, the same rules provide a nice framework upon which to build a game and I really like crafting interesting NPCs and monsters. I still had money left, so I gave it to my wife. I figure that if I ended up with an unexpected windfall, then she should benefit, too.

Subscribers and Snail Mail

Speaking of sharing the love, many thanks to everyone who renewed their subscriptions or converted their comp subscriptions into paid ones. It really helps out and makes publishing the zine much more affordable. I've said it many times before and will continue to do so: Sending and receiving actual, physical mail is a lot of fun.

Just today I got a letter from a pen pal and was really happy. I read his letter a few times before having to tackle a legal packet. Somehow my union thinks that having an attorney argue for reinstatement may help me keep my career. Maybe, maybe not. All I know is that trying to fill out a "Notice of Defense" in response to a "Motion To Show Cause" makes my head hurt. What the hell do I know about anything?

Scrollworks 1

As a little gift from me to you, I've enclosed a copy of the first issue of Scrollworks. It's crude and awkward, but it's how I got started in zine publishing. I only mailed out five copies of Scrollworks 1. If you collect old rpg zines (and damn, those are hard to find), this might be a nice addition to your collection.

Until next time,
Christian



I don't know how it happened, but I am slowly becoming a fan of White Wolf.



A stack of Scrollworks from 2000.

Number 97
April 13, 2009

Iridia

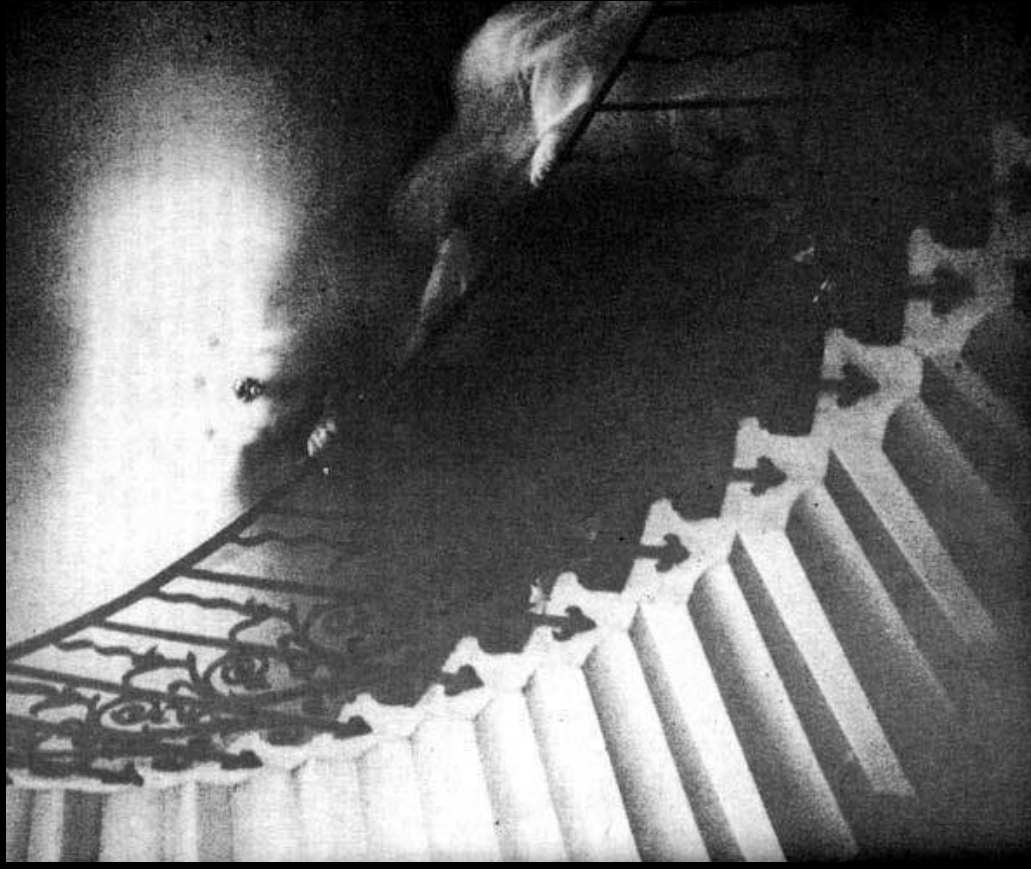
role-playing games and miniatures, old and new



A view of the Los Angeles River

The Iridia Zine
c/o Christian Walker
9903 Santa Monica Blvd. #245
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

iridlazine.net



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Jamie's girlfriend, Serena, wishes he would apply himself more. She doesn't understand his dedication to urban exploration and thinks that he should focus solely on his music. Serena has tried to book gigs for him, but Jamie is resistant. He says paranoid sounding things like, "Serena, if they know where I'll be at, they'll come get me." Serena isn't sure she can take much more of his delusional slacking. Neither can Jamie. He wishes things could be like they used to, but that's not going to happen. It all makes him very frustrated. To let of steam, he sometimes goes to the gym to hit the punching bag. Hard.

JAMIE MEDRANO

Mental Attributes (primary): Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes (tertiary): Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1

Social Attributes (secondary): Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills (secondary): Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills (tertiary): Brawl 2, Drive 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills (primary): Expression (Play Guitar, Sing, Songwriting) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Ambidextrous, Barfly, Iron Stamina 1, Toxin Resistance

Flaws: None

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Initiative Mod: 5

Defense: 2

Armor: None

Health: 6

Willpower: 5

Morality: 7

Derangements: None

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Sloth

Weapons/Attacks

Type: Ice Ax (small ax), Damage: 2L, Size: 1, Dice Pool: 5 (dex, weaponry, ice ax)

ON POINT

I've been reading Hunter: The Vigil and have thoroughly enjoyed it. The book was one of the things I bought with my birthday money. In an attempt to support my local game store, I purchased it from Aero Hobbies on Santa Monica Blvd. As the economy gets worse, I am trying very hard to save money. Sometimes it doesn't seem like shopping at the game store is the best idea when Borders or Amazon offer books at such a deep discount. Still, it's important to support game stores so I do my best.

While reading Hunter, I've been trying to understand why more people in the World of Darkness (WoD) aren't aware of monsters and the supernatural. If I understand the setting correctly, the following reasons explain the secrecy:

1) Monsters are very good at keeping their existence a secret. Vampires have the ability to Dominate anyone who witnesses them feeding. Vampires as a whole benefit from the Masquerade, an elaborate conspiracy to keep their existence a secret. Other monsters, like Werewolves, also have the ability to addle the minds of any human who sees them.

2) Monsters often exist at the fringes of society. Werewolves prefer wild, open places far from the smell and noise of man. Other creatures might lurk in the inner city, where they can feed on the homeless and others whose disappearance will not be eagerly investigated by the authorities.

3) People in the WoD don't always comprehend what they've seen. A man biting a prostitute's neck in an alley will be explained away as some psychopath hopped up on meth. Even if a person survives contact with a monster, wits intact, they are unlikely to talk about it. Their friends and family might dismiss their wild stories or look down upon them for spewing nonsense. It's much easier for the authorities to label a murderer as being mentally ill, than to accept the dark truth that perhaps the killer is a demon.

In our own world, people want to know the truth and they go to great lengths to seek it. On the SciFi and Discovery channels there are shows like "Ghost Hunters" and "Monster Quest", which seek to prove the existence of the weird and bizarre. I guess that in the WoD people

who go looking for monsters find them and don't often come back. Perhaps there is a cultural bias against exploring dark and dangerous places.

4) To a lesser extent, human-based conspiracies might suppress knowledge of the supernatural. In the Hunter rulebook, Task Force: VALKYRIE is presented as a super-secret government organization tasked with investigating, eliminating, co-opting or covering up knowledge of the supernatural.

5) Finally, Werewolves, Vampires, Prometheans and their ilk are rare. While a thick rulebook dedicated to each race and the general tone of the game might lead a player or GM to believe that the WoD is crawling with monsters, that simply isn't the case. The numbers of monsters and other weird things are so low that the factors listed above maintain the veil of secrecy.

If I've left anything out or misunderstood something, do be sure to share your thoughts with me.

In this issue I created a Hunter cell that operates here in Los Angeles. I decided to keep it local because I'm familiar with the geography and culture of the city. I've never built NPCs for a White Wolf game, so I hope I did it correctly. Because these are NPCs, I only used the character creation rules from the World of Darkness system rulebook. I left out the additional character creation guidelines from the Hunter: The Vigil rules. I wanted to keep it simple, I guess.

As I wrote the article, I tried to create a cell that was born with no fanfare. No one showed up at their door and said, "Congratulations! Welcome to The Vigil!" No, I figure that when people become Hunters, it's not something done with planning or forethought. It's more like a curse than a choice. By the time you receive this issue in the mail, a supporting vidcast will be available. You can either watch it at the Iridia website or you can go to www.youtube.com/iridiazine.

Until next time,
Christian

around in the dark. His mother even had their synagogue's rabbi call him. Seth has his doubts, too, but is loyal to his friends.

SETH COOPERMAN

Mental Attributes (primary): Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes (tertiary): Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes (secondary): Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills (primary): Academics 2, Computer 4 (Network Security, Web Design, Internet), Investigation 2, Science 3

Physical Skills (tertiary): Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills (secondary): Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Common Sense, Language 1 (Hebrew), Resources 2,

Flaws: None

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Initiative Mod: 5

Defense: 2

Armor: None

Health: 7

Willpower: 5

Morality: 7

Derangements: None

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Envy

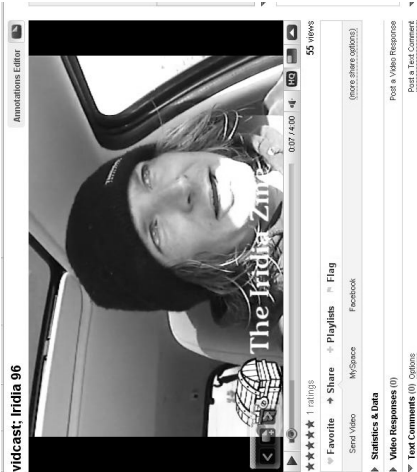
Weapons/Attacks

Type: Baseball Bat, Damage: 2B, Size: 2, Dice Pool: 5 (dex, weaponry, bat)

Jamie Medrano

musician and urban explorer

Jamie Medrano works as a parking lot attendant. He likes it because the job gives him plenty of time to write and play music on his guitar. Before getting involved with UnknownLA.com, he licensed a few of his songs to independent films and even had his music used in a show on MTV. Since the night Tommy was killed, he is less concerned with commercial success. He plays music for himself, since it gives him a way to channel the stress.



BRYAN HEYWOOD

Mental Attributes (primary): Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes (tertiary): Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes (secondary): Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills (primary): Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts 4 (painting, film editing, drawing), Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills (tertiary): Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills (secondary): Empathy 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Barfly, Direction Sense, Fame 1 (as an artist in LA), Fast Reflexes, Striking Looks (lesser version)
Flaws: None
Size: 5
Speed: 9
Initiative Mod: 4
Defense: 2
Armor: None
Health: 7
Willpower: 4
Morality: 7
Derangements: None
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Lust
Weapons/Attacks
Type: Knife, Damage: 1L, Size: 1, Dice Pool: 4 (dex, weaponry, knife)
Seth Cooperman
web designer and urban explorer
Seth Cooperman is adept at web design and network security. With Bryan's artistic influence, the UnknownLA.com website is functional, yet visually appealing. The website resides on the group's own server. The site had been hacked a few times in the past, so Seth thought it best to rely upon their own server and firewall. He has been doing a lot of reading and is trying to figure out how to track whoever it is that keeps trying to bring UnknownLA down.
Seth's family is terribly disappointed in him. They feel he is wasting his talents on some silly website about trespassing and sneaking

UnknownLA.com

new world of darkness

"Urban exploration is the examination of the normally unseen or off-limits parts of urban areas or industrial facilities. Urban exploration is also commonly referred to as infiltration, although some people consider infiltration to be more closely associated with the exploration of active or inhabited sites. It may also be referred to as "draining" (when exploring drains) "urban spelunking", "urban caving", or "building hacking".
The nature of this activity presents various risks, including both physical danger and the possibility of arrest and punishment. Many, but not all, of the activities associated with Urban Exploration could be considered trespassing or other violations of local or regional laws."
Wikipedia

UnknownLA.com is a website dedicated to urban infiltration and exploration. The site is currently maintained by three men. Their names are Bryan Heywood, Seth Cooperman and Jamie Medrano. There used to be a fourth member named Tommy Mann. His loss transformed the website's mission. Instead of being a webpage about lighthearted discovery and exploration, it has become a site that tries to educate the public on the dangers that hide in the dark.

UnknownLA.com has been on the web for three years. During its first two years the website's founders dedicated themselves to exploring abandoned buildings, drainpipes and infiltrating occupied buildings to sneak a peak into basements and steam tunnels. The men filmed their exploits, then posted them online. They accepted donations, sold advertising and pooled resources from their day jobs to finance their hobby. One year ago, all of that changed.

While filming in the LA River late one night, the four explorers thought that they heard footsteps sloshing through the shallow water behind them. Each time they stopped, so did the footsteps. Bryan, Seth, Jamie and Tommy continued on for a while, starting and stopping, each time noting that the footsteps also started and stopped. Finally, Tommy decided to stay behind. He hid behind a couch that someone had dumped into the channel. (The LA River used to be free flowing, but is now contained by a concrete channel.) The plan was

that he would see if anyone was following them so that the others could be alerted.

A few minutes after the other three walked away, a terrible scream was heard. Tommy was calling for help and screaming in pain and terror. Bryan, Seth and Jamie rushed to the couch where Tommy was hiding, but he was gone. The only items left were a bloody shoe he was wearing and Tommy's camcorder. The police were immediately called, but were of little help. In fact, Bryan, Seth and Jamie were accused of illegal dumping and were cited for trespassing. The cops said that Tommy was probably high and ran off to score more drugs.

Bryan, Seth and Jamie returned the next day, but could find no further clues. They again contacted the police and were once again chastised for trespassing. They filed a missing person report, checked nearby hospitals and walked up and down the river to no avail. Tommy was gone and no one would help.

Days later Bryan was reviewing the footage from Tommy's camera when he saw something strange. Just before Tommy called out in pain and disappeared, footsteps could clearly be heard walking toward him. Tommy's breathing increased and the footsteps grew closer still. The camera panned back and forth, but even with the night vision function of the camera, nothing was visible. Suddenly, the footsteps stopped and the screaming began. The camera was dropped and the sound of Tommy screaming and his body being slammed against the concrete were plainly heard. Tommy's shoe – the bloody one that the group found – then dropped into frame on the ground. Tommy's screaming stopped and footsteps could be heard moving away very quickly. In a few moments, Ryan, Seth and Jamie appeared.

Still determined to find their friend, Bryan, Seth and Jamie made a copy of the footage, then took the camera to the police. After much waiting, they finally spoke to a detective and showed him the video. Rather than being intrigued, the detective grew increasingly agitated. Like the other cops, he berated the three friends for trespassing, called their footage a nice attempt at making a cheesy horror film, then told them to go home. He kept the camera "for evidence" and said that he would call them if he learned anything. He never called.

Frustrated, Bryan, Seth and Jamie edited the footage and posted the video to their website. They asked for help finding Tommy and warned people to not explore the LA River near the Figueroa St. Bridge. The responses were disappointing. Just like the detective, half of the people commenting thought the video was funny and a pretty good

effort at making a horror movie. The others thought the attack was staged and that it was an unfunny joke.

Finally, and after months of mourning, they received a promising – if cryptic – e-mail. It simply read, "I am sorry for your loss. I lost a friend near the 6th Street Bridge, which isn't too far from where you were. No one will help. No one cares. We're on our own. The next time you go out into the night, take a weapon and watch your back." The three surviving friends took the note to heart.

That night they went back to the Figueroa St. Bridge, but this time they took a bat, an ice axe, some rope, a butcher knife, flares, a gallon of gas and a lighter. They all came home safely, but the thing that they burned to death will haunt their dreams for years to come. Since that night UnknownLA.com has changed in tone.

You can still watch videos of urban exploration and infiltration, but something is different now. Bryan, Seth and Jamie look tired, yet alert. As they plumb the darkness, they warn viewers about not being fooled by a harmless looking bum or to not turn their back on strange looking dogs. Viewers aren't sure if the men have lost it or are strung out on coke or perhaps they are trying to emulate the Ghost Hunters or Monster Quest shows. Their page views are down, as is advertising, but the three friends push on. They know that what happened to Tommy could happen to someone else, so they aren't going to just sit back and do nothing.

Without being aware of it, they now keep the Vigil.

Bryan Heywood *film editor and urban explorer*

Bryan Heywood is a creative personality. He edits the footage the group records and presents it with a good sense of composition, pacing and drama. Before Tommy was killed he thought about trying to become a full-time film editor. Now that his life's mission has changed, Bryan accepts short term editing position to help meet the group's expenses. Ryan also likes to paint and sketch. His artwork these days has a dark feel to it, although it's still beautiful.

When editing are painting don't relax him, Bryan drinks Scotch and watches porn. He's not proud of it, but the release helps him to calm down.

Number 98
April 20, 2009

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new



Eerie during the day, the Topanga Pedestrian Undercrossing is no place to be at night.



The Iridia Zine
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Darkness games. Please check out the supporting vidcast for this issue. It includes footage of all the areas discussed in this article.

ON POINT

I'm still trying to wrap my head around the World of Darkness. Mostly, I'm trying to figure out how I'd approach it with human characters. I own the system rulebook, Hunter: The Vigil and Changeling: The Lost. I haven't opened Changeling yet. I'm still trying to read my other books. I think that establishing the setting and mood would be my biggest challenges. When placed in a similar situation with other games, I'll often craft NPCs and locations. By working on various components, perhaps they will come together in some meaningful way. Then again, maybe not.

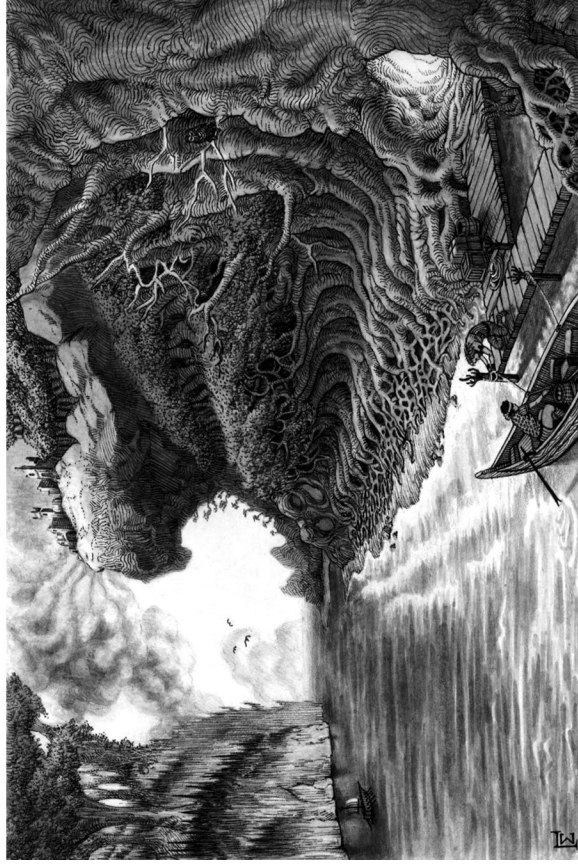
I think that I got off to a good start last week. As a GM, it's important for me to have some sort of a group template to work with. It strains my disbelief a bit too much when the party is comprised of random races, factions and classes with no reason to hang out with one another. While that is an accepted theme in D&D, I'm not sure it'd work so well in other systems. The investigators I crafted like week satisfy my need for a group of related individuals who have come together for a common purpose. In this week's issue, I'd like to continue with the foundation laid in Iridia 97.

Topanga State Beach, which is found where Topanga Canyon Blvd meets Pacific Coast Highway, is a decent surf spot. It's rocky as hell and the locals are often angry and willing to punch transgressors in the face. Still, I love to surf there because I don't overestimate my own abilities and I know when to shut my mouth. A few months back I noticed a pedestrian crossing that allows passage from one side of the highway to the other. I pointed it out to a few friends who didn't know it existed. It's that hidden.

The walkway runs along a creek that flows into the ocean and it's pretty damn creepy. Homeless people sometimes sleep there and it stinks of piss. There is all kinds of crazy graffiti on the walls. The place is pretty spooky and everyone I know prefers to jaywalk across the highway instead of using it. Naturally, it reminds me of the World of Darkness, so I've decided to write about it in this issue. I think it could serve a variety of functions in a campaign.

In other news, my gaming group is trying to find a new direction. A rash of cancellations and dissatisfaction with our Werewolf: The Apoca-

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lype game leaves us scratching our heads. I love to game and enjoy our bi-weekly flights of fancy. The recent conflicts and cancellations have got me down, though. I offered up the GM chair and space to play, but I am considering taking it back. I would rather GM a consistent game than play sporadically in a campaign where people are at odds.

A proposed solution to our dilemma is to start a new campaign and to share the GMing duties. One GM would kick things off and run a few sessions to establish a baseline. Afterward, the role of GM would rotate, offering everyone a chance to either play or referee. We haven't decided upon a system, but Shadowrun 4e is a leading candidate. I played a lot of Shadowrun in the early 90s, so I hope it's still a fun game. From those games I recall a quote, "Hey man, if the game designers didn't want us to hose down the streets with a mini-gun, then why did they put stats for it in the rulebook?"

Until next time,

Christian



Perhaps some Shadowrun might get our group back on track.

panga Ranch Motel is vacant. There are many rumors, of course. The most disturbing tale involves a baffling suicide.

Two years ago the charred body of a woman was found inside the kitchenette stove of a low number two. A video camera was also found in the kitchen, standing on a tripod and pointing at the oven. No tape was found inside the camera at the time. Although the incident was originally labeled as a homicide by police, an unmarked mini-DV tape was later discovered in the parking lot.

Despite its worn condition, and the fact that it contained no audio, police were still able to view the contents of the tape. It depicted a woman recording herself in front of a video camera (seemingly using the same camera the police found in the kitchen). After positioning the camera to include both her and the kitchenette stove in the frame, the tape then showed her turning on the oven, opening the door, crawling inside, then closing the door behind her. Eight minutes into the video, the oven could be seen shaking violently, after which point thick black smoke could be seen emanating from it. The camera then continued to roll for another 45 minutes until the battery apparently died.

To avoid disturbing public, police never released any information about the tape or even the fact that it was found. Police were also not able to determine who left the tape in the parking lot.

Conclusion

The area around Topanga State Beach is ripe with opportunities for intrigue and supernatural terror. While this article was written with Hunter: The Vigil in mind, it would be equally useful for other World of

Despite their vigilance, the occasional homeless person is claimed by a predator. When this happens, the police are never contacted. Doing so might cause the itinerants reporting the violence to fall under suspicion. Many of the homeless have outstanding warrants and would rather not be taken to jail. Hunters who befriend the transients might be alerted when something foul stalks the area.

Although the deception resulted in their grisly deaths, one cell of Hunters attempted to ambush a vampire by posing as a group of drunken bums. Perhaps the ruse could be used again to better effect?

It is rumored that the ghost of a slain man still lurks in the underpass at night. His restless spirit sometimes calls out to others. Amateur ghost hunters have tried to secure evidence of its existence, but most have run away in fright as soon as it manifested itself. In life, the ghost's name was Ed. He was killed in his sleep by another homeless person. It has taken Ed's spirit a long time to understand that he is dead. Because he was killed in his sleep, he often thinks he is dreaming. When he realizes that this is no dream, his ghost cries out in anguish. The sound of Ed's moaning from the tunnel can be quite disturbing, although most mistake it for traffic on PCH.

Topanga Ranch Motel

The deserted Topanga Ranch Motel has seen better days. Despite being located on prime real estate, the paint is cracked, the bungalows vacant and the weeds rampant.

As mentioned previously, its parking lot is mostly used as an overnight campground. The vacant bungalows make for perfect hiding places. The locks are easily broken and once access has been gained, it is hard to see inside from the street. Few know why the To-



Few use the undercrossing, even in broad daylight.

six

THE TOPANGA PEDESTRIAN UNDERCROSSING

hunter: the vigil

The Topanga pedestrian undercrossing is a seldom seen and even less-used walkway that allows pedestrians to pass under the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH). It connects the parking lot in front of the now-defunct Topanga Ranch Motel and the popular Topanga State Beach. The undercrossing is a weirdness magnet, mostly because of its proximity to the beach.

Topanga State Beach

In the summer, hordes of people living in the stifling hot San Fernando Valley drive south to escape the heat. Topanga Valley Road connects the busy 101 to the Pacific Coast Highway. Where Topanga Valley Blvd meets the beach is, well, Topanga State Beach. To surfers, Topanga is an above average, right point break that works in all tides and swells. The locals there are surly at best and deeply resent intrusions. If you can't handle yourself in the water, the locals will let you know it and aren't afraid to

settle disputes on the beach. More than one "Val" (person from the Valley) has gone home with a shiner after stealing a wave from a local. To non-surfers, Topanga State Beach offers plenty of sand and abundant free parking. The free parking is what attracts most people, espe-



three

cially itinerants who live in RVs.

Itinerants

The RVers travel as far north as the Ventura County Line, some 20 miles away. Topanga is a popular stopping point, since they can easily park across the PCH at the abandoned Topanga Ranch Motel. The men and women who live in their RVs are a curious lot. Some suffer from alcoholism, mental illness or lack the desire or ability to live in mainstream society. They gladly accept charity and in turn they can be a valuable source of information. The itinerants see everything and know the habits of beach regulars. Many of the itinerants have outstanding warrants and have had many run-ins with law enforcement. As a result, they are rarely aggressive and prefer to keep a low profile.

Through the lens of the World of Darkness, the itinerant campers might count a few retired Hunters among their number. Maybe "retired" is not the proper term. The Hunters who live in such a shabby condition have had their wits shattered by the things they've dealt with. Tired and weak, they now lead a humble existence. Perhaps some of them worry about ghosts from the past coming to collect an old debt or settle a score. Living on the road allows them to stay on the move. Then again, some of the RVers might be predators. Surely there could be a slasher in their midst. Who really knows what goes on in the back of one of those dilapidated vehicles. Traveling between Venice Beach and the county line offers nearly 30 miles of hunting ground and plenty of potential victims.

four

Victims

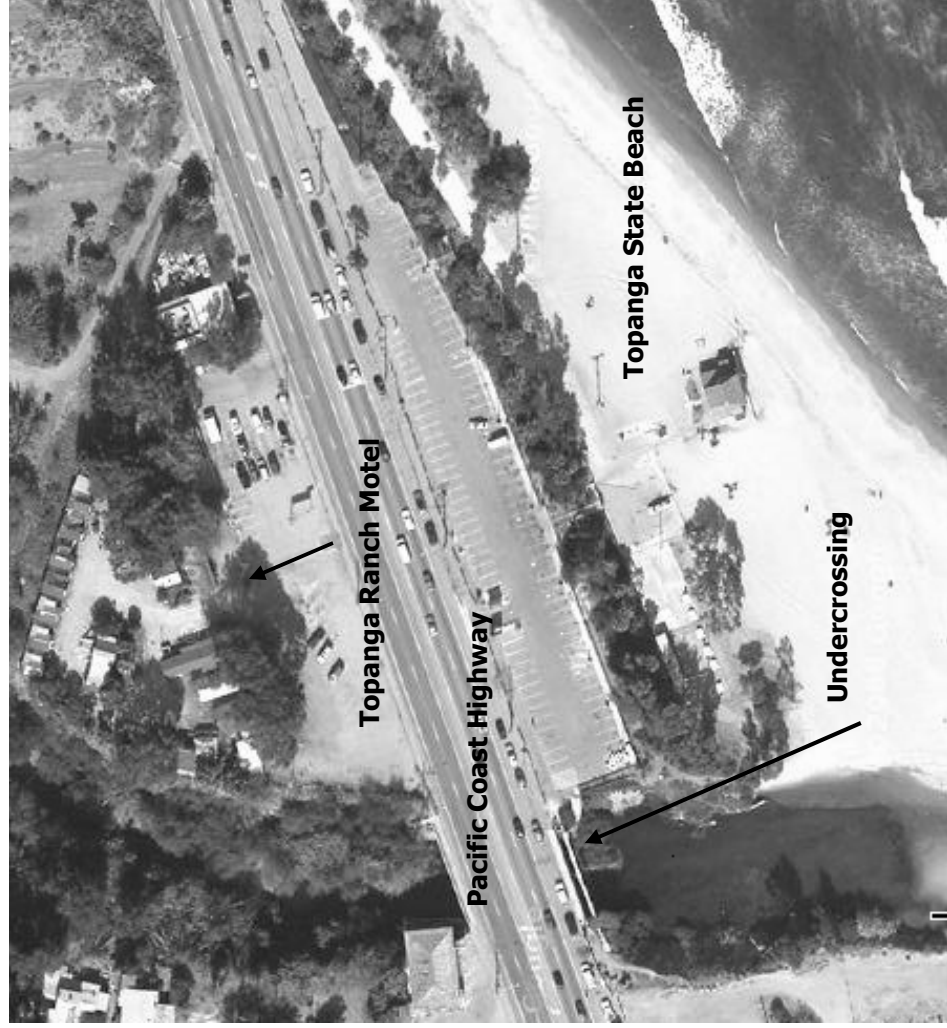
Potential victims of slashers, vampires or God knows what else are abundant at Topanga State Beach. During the day beachgoers are relatively safe, even those who use the pedestrian undercrossing to get between the Topanga Ranch Motel and the beach. At night, however, things are very different. The morning after a weekend or holiday, used condoms, discarded panties and broken beer bottles are a common sight along the street, in the parking lot, on the sand and in the undercrossing. The undercrossing serves as a convenient place to lurk.

A predator can lay in wait and have an excellent view of the parking lots. If a pedestrian uses the undercrossing, the predator can merely wait in the tunnel. By the time a victim is aware he or she is not alone, they are well out of view from potential eyewitnesses. Any cries for help will be drowned out by the traffic above or by the ocean.

The Homeless

In addition to the itinerants living in RVs, there are a few homeless who seek shelter in the area. The undercrossing is a convenient, out of the way place to stay when it's raining or when privacy is desired. Homeless individuals can drink, sleep, eat and urinate in relative peace. Since most people avoid the undercrossing, they are seldom bothered. The homeless know that danger stalks the creek and undercrossing, so they are wary. They have a sense of when evil is afoot. At those times, they stay clear of the undercrossing. Those who know the patterns of the homeless avoid the area when the transients do, too.

five



Iridia

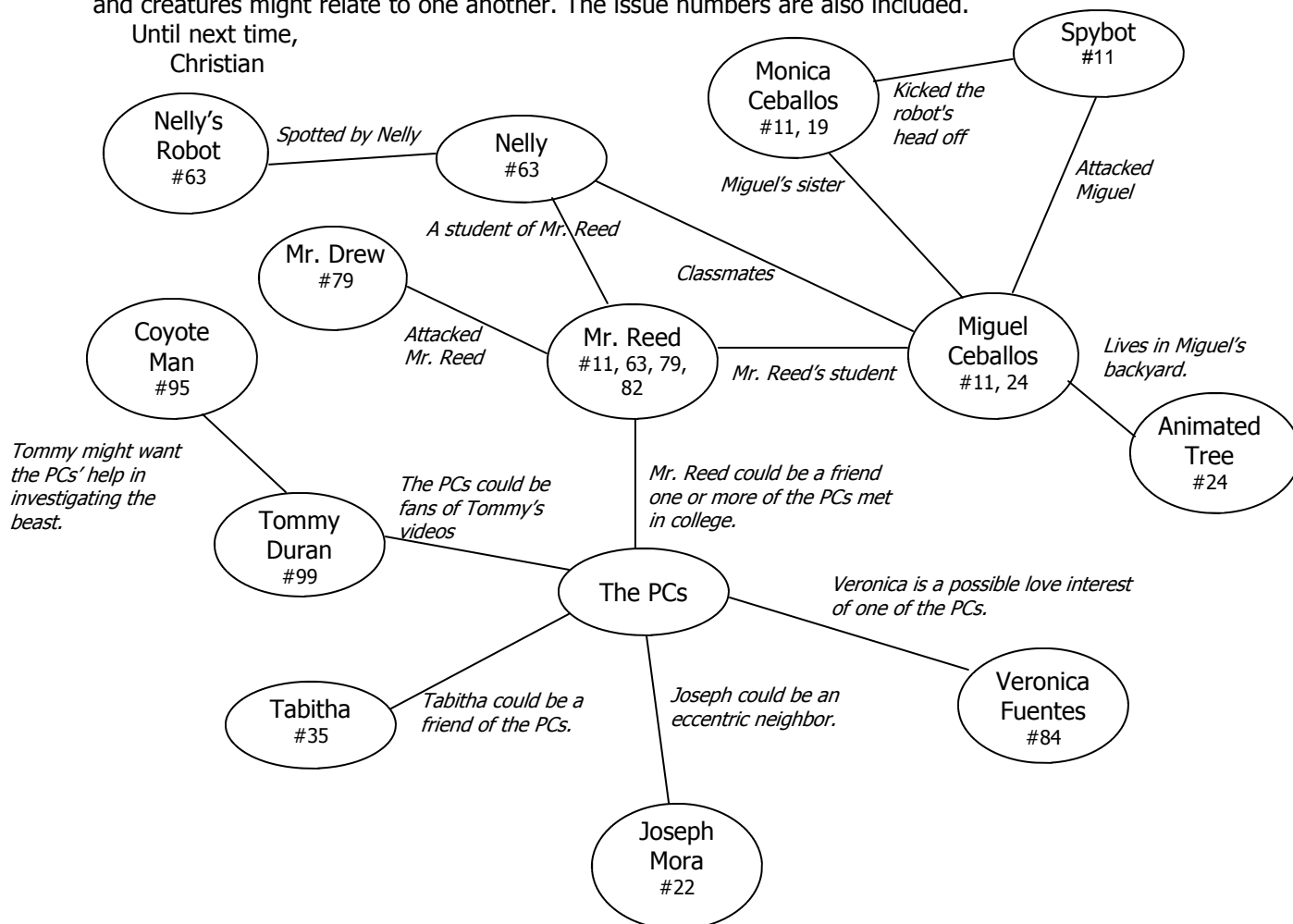
role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

Our Werewolf: The Apocalypse campaign rolls along. Our last session found us in a Las Vegas strip club, chewing on handfuls of prescription painkillers and chugging bottles of vodka. Later, there was an alley fight with deranged were-hyenas, then we collected a gambling debt. I have no idea if we are playing the game in the manner it was intended, but damn we are having fun. I think the campaign is serving as a cathartic release and we shoot, booze, fight and rampage our way through each session. I know from experience that it's not a sustainable style of play. Once we've had our fill of mayhem, I'm sure we'll settle down to something more sedate. Then again, we might just continue on our path of destruction, until we become Black Spiral Dancers and our bodies erupt in black, oozing tumors.

In this issue I wanted to add to the collection of GURPS NPCs I've written. They all live in and around Los Angeles. Some have been rather mundane, others less so. The NPC in this issue is inspired by the three fellows from Iridia 97. In that issue I presented some World of Darkness NPCs who run a mystery-seeking website called UnknownLA.com. I really like the idea and decided to scale it down to fit in with the GURPS 4e material. I also created a relationship web below to show how the various NPCs and creatures might relate to one another. The issue numbers are also included.

Until next time,
Christian



Tommy Duran

gurps 4e

Tommy Duran, a lonely mail carrier, is obsessed with blogs and vlogs. He follows at least 50 blogs on Google's Blogger and he subscribes to nearly 75 vlogs on YouTube. He is fascinated by other people's lives and finds them much more interesting than his own. He likes the good and the bad. Hell, Tommy even wonders when Boxy will make another video. There's something about her annoying, mindless babble that captivates him.

Eventually, Tommy decided to start his own vlog. He bought a Sony Handycam and began filming his day. He made short videos as he drove to work, rode elevators and even as walked through the grocery store. His videos got very few hits at first, but then he slowly began attracting traffic. People began to make comments about subtle touches in the vids that Tommy himself didn't notice.

For example, while riding an elevator down to the parking level at the Borders in Westwood, the car stopped. Tommy, who always carries his camera, began filming. He talked about his predicament and began pushing all of the buttons to hopefully get the elevator moving again. Hours passed and eventually repairmen got the car going and Tommy was freed. Tommy posted a shortened version of his ordeal to his YouTube channel. A few days later, people began making comments to the effect of, "Dude, I liked how you defaced the elevator." or "Ha ha I like how you wrote "You will never escape."" Sure as anything, when Tommy looked at the video, he saw "You will never escape." scrawled on the elevator's door. Tommy assured the viewers that he did not write those words, but no one believed him.

That incident led to a series of similar events. When driving home one day, Tommy decided to film the Miracle Mile, a stretch of Wilshire between Fairfax and La Brea. The area is notable for the La Brea tar pits and great examples of art deco architecture. When Tommy reviewed the footage, a homeless man was seen standing at the corner of Wilshire and La Brea. A few blocks later, this same man is seen at Cloverdale, then again at Hauser. At a loss to explain the phenomenon, Tommy posted it to YouTube and asked his subscribers to help him figure it out. All he got were comments like, "Nice work with Final Cut Pro, asshole." or "Dude you suck at Sony Vegas. I can totally tell how you tried to composite that homeless dude."

After reviewing his previous videos, Tommy found strange numbers, glyphs, blurry images and unexplainable quirks in almost every one. Tommy is at a loss to explain what is happening to him and he is growing increasingly worried that he's losing his mind. What he needs is someone to take him under their wing, to mentor him and to help him understand that the world is indeed a mysterious place. Instead of being frightened, Tommy might come to accept that spirits exist and that they are trying to reach out to him.

* With the help of the Powers book I might tweak Tommy's Medium advantage to have the limitation of requiring a camcorder to communicate with and/or detect spirits. An enhancement is that he could actually see what the spirits look like.

Tommy Duran (41 points)
SM 0 (5' 10" tall, 180 lbs.);
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 11 [20], HT 11 [10];
HP 10, Will 9 [-10], Per 11, FP 11;
Basic Lift 20, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d;
Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Fit [5], Medium [10]*, Tenure [5].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Always Carries a Camcorder [-1], Compulsive Behavior (obsessed with blogs and vlogs) (6) [-10], Magic Susceptibility 2 [-6].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-13 [4], Computer Operation-13 [4], Driving-11 [4], Professional Skill (letter carrier)-12 [4], Urban Survival-11 [2].

Equipment

Sony DCR-SR85 Handycam, 2005 Toyota Camry, Blackberry Curve 8300.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

This week's issue was inspired by a thread on RPG.net. The purpose of the thread was to share ridiculous campaign ideas that you'd like to run, but never will. I've described my entry below. I guess I've been on a modern campaign kick of late. I think all gamers go through periods where it's all one style of play or another. For years I was focused purely on fantasy, but now I'm really itching to run some modern action.

Until next time,
Christian

Expired Meters - a game of mystery, horror and weirdness in L.A.

gurps 4e

"Anyone can put out a fire or arrest a drunk. Try putting a boot on a vampire's car while a crack whore throws empty beer bottles at you."

-James Thaddeus Brewer, Parking Enforcement supervisor

The characters in this campaign begin play as Parking Enforcement officers. While a few PCs might have the skills and talents to do something with more prestige and better pay, something holds them back. Perhaps they are lazy, uninspired or damaged by a recent trauma. Then again, perhaps the player characters like the freedom of driving around the city, listening to talk radio and writing tickets. Regardless of their personal abilities and talents, all of the characters have been drawn to Parking Enforcement for one simple reason—it's where the action is. Sure, the fire and police departments are well-respected and have cool uniforms, but Parking Enforcement is where it's at.

Anyone *in the know* will tell you that the Department of Public Works, the Department of Beaches and Harbors and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation Parking Enforcement all offer opportunities for supernatural, weird and bizarre encounters. The trick, however, is having the right skill set and to catch the eye of the supervisor in charge of such oddities. Call it fate, but in the Expired Meters campaign, the PCs have arrived in such a situation. While their job description may seem humdrum, it's actually an exciting line of work. Los Angeles is full of ghosts, cultists, blood-sucking fiends, depraved mages and other oddities. As a member of Parking Enforcement, characters will not only earn a living, but they'll have a chance to make the city a safer place.

Character Creation

Creating a character for the Expired Meters campaign begins with choosing a phobia, addiction or supernatural talent (or all three) that precludes an individual from seeking a career with good pay, upward mobility and a modicum of fame. This is not to say that the fine people who work for Parking Enforcement are underachiev-



Save the excuses. Your quarters are needed to fund a war against the forces of darkness.

ers, but let's be honest. It's by and large shit work for shit pay. Everyone hates you and you hate everyone right back. So why have you wound up there? Perhaps your character is an alcoholic, is paranoid, is chronically lazy, has a terrible secret or spends all his time trying to decipher the blood-stained book of spells found in a dumpster.

This step basically defines the core struggle and/or ability of the character. A few examples: Danny is a drunk, who is fascinated by the occult. (See stat block.) Irma can channel spirits, but keeps getting fired from jobs because she stays up too late with her Ouija board and sleeps through her alarm. Gabriel is an aspiring ghost hunter and needs a job with flexible hours and good benefits.

The next step is to purchase ability scores, advantages, disadvantages and skills. Characters start with 65 points and a max of 20 points in disadvantages/quirks are allowed. Characters must purchase Driving [DX/Avg] at DX, Area Knowledge (los angeles) [IQ/Avg] at IQ and Professional Skill (city employee) [IQ/Avg] at IQ. They get Immunity from Parking Tickets as a free Perk.

Tiger Teams

The characters will be organized into a "Tiger Team." Parking Enforcement created Tiger Teams (No, I'm not making this up.) to deploy to high-traffic areas to keep people moving. They quickly cite transgressors or tow any vehicles impeding traffic during rush hour. I think the name is lame, but it's ridiculous enough to work. Even though the party will not know one another before play, they will be working closely with one another as soon as the game begins.

James Thaddeus Brewer

The party will be based out of the Henry Medina West Los Angeles Parking Enforcement Facility. The chief supervisor is a serious, imposing man named James Thaddeus Brewer. Brewer grew up in Oakland, California and served 20 years in the United States Marine Corps. While fighting in Desert Storm he witnessed the horror of the oil field fires and the charred bodies of Iraqi soldiers. Something inside him changed and from that point forward, James became obsessed with trying to do as much good in the world as possible.

James is a tough boss, but he has an eye for talent. He's looking for uniquely skilled individuals willing to put themselves at risk to cull the numerous forms of evil that lurk in the city. He's noticed something special about the PCs and has hand-selected them for covert duties.

Bring on the Evil!

As members of Parking Enforcement, the characters will be able to move easily about the city. They will be rather non-descript and will have access to a number of restricted areas. Keys to parking meters will provide funds (albeit loose change) to purchase any special supplies they need. During play Brewer will assign them special tasks that have come across his desk from secret contacts or from the heads of other bureaus. Good luck and good hunting!

Danny Martin (39 points)

SM 0 (5' 11' tall, 190 lbs.);
ST 12 [20], DX 10, IQ 10, HT 11 [10];
HP 11, Will 9 [-5], Per 10, FP 11;
Basic Lift 29, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+2;
Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry 8, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

High Pain Threshold [10], Less Sleep 2 [4], Tenure [5], Immunity from Parking Tickets [1].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Alcoholism [-15], Curious [-5].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-11 [4], Brawling-11 [2], Driving-11 [4], Occultism-11 [2], Professional Skill (city employee)-10 [2].

Attacks

Punch-11, Dam 1d-2 cr, Reach C, Parry 8.

Equipment

LG VX8360 cell phone, 6 oz. flask with Absolut, \$18, bus pass.

Danny Martin is obsessed with the Occult. He drinks too much, but is a good guy nonetheless.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

We played the last session of our Werewolf: The Apocalypse campaign on Memorial Day. (You saw the YouTube video, right? If you didn't, then what the hell? Subscribe to channel IridiaZine!) The fellas came over early and we had a barbecue before the dice rolled. We absolutely gorged on carne asada and laughed about my desire to create and market a Nancy Pelosi blow-up doll. I'm sure someone would buy it.

Sadly, the Werewolf campaign ended in a whimper. A variety of factors were at work, but I did learn a few things. The GM should always have a clear vision of what the game is about and where it's going. The PCs should, too. Everyone needs to be on the same page. Inspired by the demise of this game, I decided to write a little essay about what I look for in a campaign on the back page. On the front page of this week's installment is Miguel Ceballos. He's been written about in numerous issues and it's about time the poor kid got his own stat block.

Until next time,
Christian

Miguel Ceballos

gurps 4e

Miguel Ceballos is a second grader at Orchid Street Elementary. He's had many interesting encounters in his young life and Miguel wishes dearly that he could be left alone. After a while, being chased by crazed mini-robots (Iridia 11) and attacked by carnivorous trees (Iridia 24) gets old.

His teacher, Mr. Reed (Iridia 82), has offered encouraging words, but there's not a lot he can do because of school rules. Miguel's parents are too busy with their own lives to help Miguel out of his various jams, so he's on his own where adults are concerned. The only person he can count on is his older sister Monica (Iridia 19). Even then, Monica has a hectic schedule so she can't always look after him.

Fortunately, Miguel isn't alone. Some of his fellow students have been plagued by various spirits and beasts. Under the guidance of a high school student named Katie, the children are in the process of forming a group called the Orchid Street Elementary Monster Hunters. Seeing themselves as Jedi, Clone Troopers or super heroes, the students are slowly gathering the courage required to face their fears.

To see how Miguel relates to other NPCs presented in this zine, please see the relationship web from Iridia 99.

Miguel Ceballos (2 points)

SM -1 (3' 8" tall, 50 lbs.);
ST 5 [-50], DX 9 [-20], IQ 8 [-40], HT 9 [-10];
HP 5, Will 8, Per 10 [10], FP 9;
Basic Lift 5, Damage: Thr 1d-5/Sw 1d-3;
Basic Speed 3.25, Basic Move 3;
Dodge 6, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Ally (sister, 6 or less) [5], Cute [1], Danger Sense [15], Patron (parents, 15 or less) [30], Silence 1 [5].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dead Broke [-25], Short Attention Span (9) [-15], Shyness (mild) [-5], Social Stigma (minor) [-5].

Skills

Hobby Skill (video games)-10 [2], Swimming-10 [2], Throwing-9 [2].

Equipment

Nintendo DS, comic books.

Focused, Lasered, Organized

what I look for in a campaign

It has taken me a long time, but I think I've finally articulated the framework I want a campaign to follow, both as a player and GM. I'll briefly describe the various components below.

System

I prefer to play a system that has a rulebook that's either in print or is easily had for a reasonable price on EBay. I think sessions flow more smoothly when everyone has access to the rules. I expect the GM and players to be versed in the mechanics, so that rule discussions can be easily resolved. When I'm GMing, I don't like it when players look to me to make every ruling concerning their character. I prefer that they know the rules, too. If they are familiar with the game mechanics, then they can suggest a way to adjudicate their PCs' actions.

Also, I like books at the table. I feel that rules in .pdf format lead to unnecessary visits to Facebook, YouTube, etc. I like everyone to be *in* the game.

Furthermore, I don't like tons of house rules. Playing a game as written lends to equity between the PCs and GM. I trust the game designers to have done their job well. I don't think players should learn the rules, the campaign setting, then 10 pages of house rules. Cut out the house rules.

I Don't Mind A Ride On A Train...but the rails should come off now and again

I don't like sandbox games. I don't want characters to wander in random directions. I like there to be clear goals and objectives. If PCs lack a direction, they will often lash out and engage in all sorts of foolishness. Role-playing suffers because the PCs aren't sure of their role in the setting. I think there should be a plot or story arc, but it should be adaptable. As play progresses, the needs and interests of the players and their characters should be taken into account.

Begin With An End In Mind

A GM should determine what the campaign's goal is. To achieve that goal, objectives should be defined so that progress in the campaign can be charted. I think that having benchmarks aids in session planning and helps to provide a framework for play. As sessions pass, the PCs and GM will feel that they are heading in a definite direction and future goals will become evident.

Episodic

I don't have a lot of time to play—5 hours every two weeks. As a result, I like sessions to be self-contained. Each session should have a goal that can be met during the time allotted. Think of a television episode. There is a definite beginning, middle and end. Even though a session is a stand-alone event, it contributes to a greater whole. I like this format because it accommodates player absences and no one comes to the next session trying to remember where their character is, how many hit points they have left and how much ammo remains. You get to start fresh each meeting!

I Like Violence

My life is stressful. During play, I like when things get broken and people get killed. It's fun to mash as it provides a stress release. In my campaigns, expect combat and minis. I freaking love minis.

Give PCs a Reason To Care...and hate

It's easy to afflict the PCs with obnoxious NPCs. Annoying NPCs motivate the PCs to go out and brawl. However, a GM really needs to give the PCs a reason to care. If every NPC the PCs encounter is a tool, the characters will hate everyone and everything in the setting. PCs need people who are genuinely kind and decent to care about.

In Conclusion

I like games that are well-thought out, organized and that take player interest into account. It also never hurts for the players and GM to stay in touch via e-mail.

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Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

My friends and I have re-grouped from our Werewolf game and are planning something new. We will be meeting on Wednesday nights to play Shadowrun 4e. I look forward to the experience. I don't think I've played Shadowrun since, perhaps, 1992. It's tough for me to stay up late on weeknights, but I'll just have to wear my big boy underpants and suck it up.

Prior to the game, I'll be barbecuing. I found two awesome recipes. One is for tri-tip with a Cuban Mojo sauce (citrus, garlic, olive oil) and the other is for pineapple skewers with a caramel and coconut dip. It should be a pretty good meal. Because the Memorial Day barbecue was such a success (Please see Memorial Day barbecue vid on YouTube.), preparing food before games might become a tradition. Besides, I need practice in the kitchen and on the grill. My wife cooks for me all the time, so I should return the favor and stop being lazy. ;)

I apologize for any confusion when I wrote that I would be suspending publication of the zine. I thought about going in a different direction, but at the end of the day Iridia is doing just fine as it is. One reader wrote to me and said something to the effect of, "I really look forward to seeing what you write each week. It's always fun to read." That's really the ticket. Sending out snail mail that brightens peoples' day. Moving forward, I will rely upon PayPal donations instead of subscriptions. If people like the zine, they can send a few bucks now and again and we'll call it good. Nice and informal works for me.

In this issue I share a snippet of an idea I'm working on for a Changeling: The Lost prelude. I'd like to run a Changeling game some day and would like to have the prelude take the form of an extended adventure. It'd be neat to explore an abduction by a Keeper, the hellish existence in Faerie, then the eventual escape through the hedge.

Until next time,
Christian

Caught in the Lens; A Prelude for Changeling: The Lost world of darkness

We sat in a basement that smelled like urine, mold and rotting wood. The four of us were huddled around a wobbly table. Upon it were the only tools we had to defend ourselves: a revolver, knife, two flashlights, a baseball bat and an axe. We hoped that they would be enough. We thought that whoever—or whatever—had brought us to this hellish place had placed them here for us to find. It all seemed to be part of a perverse game. So be it.

A camera in a corner of the ceiling panned toward us, the lenses inside shifting. Cameras were all over that twisted landscape. In fact, the man—I think it was a man—who brought us there had used a camera to capture each of us. I still can't explain that one.

A creepy-looking man had asked to take my photo. I thought he was a tourist, so I consented. When the flash went off, it was blinding. As I covered my eyes with my hands, I suddenly felt rough hands gripping me. And then came the briars. I had the sensation of being pulled through brambles, with thorns ripping at my flesh. It sounds crazy, but it also felt like the thorns were tearing away at more



than my flesh. It was like they were ripping at the very essence of who I was.

When I came through the briars, my vision cleared and I stood in the middle of a town. It looked to be a small town, like the kind of place you'd see in middle America. But it was different. Creepy. Cold and grim and falling to ruin. I thought I had had a stroke or something. Maybe I was having a heart attack.

So anyway, there was myself and three other abductees in that crappy basement with the weapons on the table and the video camera pointed at us. I gave the camera the finger and turned my attention back to the table. Just then we heard a crashing upstairs. Something had smashed through the barricade we set up to block the front door. As soon as we heard the tumult, our hands shot out and quickly grabbed a weapon. There was a brief struggle as a few of us tried to grab the same weapon, but it didn't last long. I ended up with the bat. Dammit!

We gathered at the base of the stairs, eyeing the basement door at the top. We could hear something shuffling along the floor. We tried to control our breathing as it drew nearer. It was so messed up. I just kept repeating, "This is not happening. This is not happening."

Notes

The inspiration for the prelude comes from something I read at RPG.net. Basically, a powerful fae takes a photo of a town in our world. He is able to distort the image, darkening the colors, adding a patina and generally making the place look dreary. The Keeper then captures humans with his camera, copying and pasting them into the landscape. Perhaps the people he captures are those who love to look at themselves. People who like to take self-portraits, then post them on message boards for all to see.

Afterward, the Keeper makes the whole thing come alive. He delights in watching the trapped humans run from horrors he has created and let loose. Cameras monitor everything. At night the previous day's events are played back, the screaming and terror of the hunt echoing throughout the ruins.

The game of hide and seek is endless. Each time the humans are captured and battered, they are let loose and the chase begins anew. As the magic of Arcadia takes its toll, the humans begin to warp and change. Their skin takes on the appearance to film negatives, their eyes look like camera lenses that shift and spin to focus. They speak in the chatter and whirl of antiquated cameras. Like a camera enthusiast who spends time in a dark room, they begin to prefer the darkness and the shelter it provides.

And then they escape. While assisting their Keeper on an errand to our world, the thralls run free and the campaign then becomes about the characters finding a place in a world that has moved on without them.

Mechanical Considerations

I think that a Darkling would be an appropriate Seeming for the characters after they escape Faerie. I'm not sure if any of the Kiths included in the Darkling Seeming match the prelude. The characters' mien would be that as described above. (celluloid skin, lenses for eyes, voices that sound like the clicking and whirring of antiquated cameras, a preference for the darkness) As far as Courts go, the Autumn Court or Winter Court may be the most appropriate.

Style

I know that the approach I've described regarding character creation is a bit heavy-handed. As a first time Storyteller, I would like to craft a chronicle with as few variables as possible. If I ever get a chance to play this game, I'll let you know how it worked out.





Iridia

Number 104
June 8, 2009

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

On June 5th my wife and I went to see our friend Patrick in a musical called Ecstasy. As I was watching the play I was thinking to myself, "So THIS is what a Lords of Creation campaign would be like!" I thought about it some more and decided that instead of the Tom Moldvay classic, the lead characters in the play would actually fit nicely in my series of Weird L.A. articles for GURPS 4e.

One of the lead characters in the play, Angel, is able to travel to an alternate earth. The Jumper ability models this nicely. The ability to travel to another world through sheer force of will—like the Jumper advantage—is such a staple of pulp-era science fiction, or science fantasy if you prefer. The first book I ever read where a character had that ability was a Robert Howard work, the name of which escapes me. Robert Howard's book had all sorts of violence, sub-humans and raw sexual passion. The musical Ecstasy lacked some of the hack and slash, but there was an erotic flavor, so I wasn't complaining.

In this week's installment I present Angel, the reclusive college student with the Jumper ability. Perhaps in a future issue I could detail the city of Ecstasy, its factions and prominent NPCs. It would be a fascinating setting in which to explore romantic relationships and issues of gender and sexuality.

Until next time,
Christian

Angel, Queen of Ecstasy gurps 4e

Angel is a shy, romantically-frustrated Physics major at UCLA. She spends most of her time studying and attending classes. For fun, she might study in the library instead of her dorm room. When not studying, Angel often sketches.

She is a rather talented artist and likes to draw random people on her campus. In her drawings, the people often take on an erotic twist. For example, a librarian Angel often sees at school is drawn with fishnet stockings and a skin-tight, psychedelic micro mini. An assistant basketball coach she saw near the gym is reimagined as a transvestite with a remarkable physique. (Hi, Patrick!)

Angel's math and art skills are not her only talents. Incredibly, Angel is able to travel between the world she knows and an alternate earth. On the alternate earth, her home is a city called Ecstasy. In Ecstasy she rules as a radiant queen.



Directed and Choreographed by the amazing and genius Kay Cole!

Two virginal college students adventure to a sexual land of OZ where anything is possible! "Ecstasy" is a playfully risqué musical comedy with a message of love and redemption. Tom and Angel - two shy, repressed college students, go to the land of Ecstasy where things look and sound suspiciously like a vision of the future circa the "free love" early 1970's. The two embark on a series of wild musical adventures and encounter intriguing characters that ultimately bring them towards their real selves, each other, and true love.



Angel's ability to travel between Los Angeles and Ecstasy is fueled by her desire to become a confident, desirable diva. In Ecstasy she convinced the citizens that she was a lover with unrivaled ability and that she possessed incredible insight into affairs of the heart. Her ruse worked. Ecstasy embraced its new queen and now looks to her for inspiration.

Sadly, not all is well. Angel is continually drawn back to Los Angeles where she feels the need to live her "real" life. The only thing keeping her in L.A. is the hope that she might win the heart of Tom, a fellow freshman. Tom is equally shy and socially awkward. While he has strong feelings for Angel, Tom is too afraid to express them and really doesn't know how to, anyway.

Angel has been scheming in order to bridge the gap between them. If she can take Tom to Ecstasy, perhaps she can woo him in an atmosphere that's charged with sex, excitement and a lack of inhibitions. The task will be no easy matter, however. Angel's reign is opposed by an oppressive religious group led by the sexually-repressed Dr. Morrall. The church espouses a doctrine of chastity. To gain power in Ecstasy, Dr. Morrall plans to assassinate Angel.

Below are two stat blocks for Angel. One represents Angel when she is a student in L.A., while the other is her persona in Ecstasy.

Angel, Physics Major (199 points)

SM 0 (5' 7" tall, 115 lbs.);
ST 9 [-10], DX 10, IQ 13 [60], HT 10;
HP 9, Will 13, Per 13, FP 10;
Basic Lift 16, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d-3;
Basic Speed 5.0, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Jumper (world) (+50%; extra carrying capacity—extra heavy) [150], Sensitive [5].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Bad Sight (nearsighted) (-60%, glasses) [-10], Secret (utter rejection; can travel to another world) [-10], Shyness (mild) [-5], Skinny [-5], Wealth (struggling) [-10].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-13 [1], Area Knowledge (ecstasy)-13 [1], Artist (drawing)-12 [2], Computer Operation-13 [1], Driving-10 [2], Math (applied)-13 [4], Persuade-12 [2], Physics-12 [4], Public Speaking-12 [1], Singing-12 [4], Sway Emotions-12 [2].

Equipment

Sketch book, pen, Macbook, glasses, LG Rumor, Texas Instruments TI 83 calculator.

Angel, Queen of Ecstasy (352 points)

SM 0 (5' 7" tall, 115 lbs.);
ST 9 [-10], DX 10, IQ 13 [60], HT 10;
HP 9, Will 13, Per 13, FP 10;
Basic Lift 16, Damage: Thr 1d-2/Sw 1d-3;
Basic Speed 5.0, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry -, Block -;
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Allies (household guards and servants; 25% of Angel's point total, 100 members in group, almost all of the time) [36], Beautiful [12], Jumper (world) (+50%; extra carrying capacity—extra heavy) [150], Charisma 2 [10], Reputation 3 (gorgeous and insightful ruler, everyone, all of the time) [15], Sensitive [5], Status 5 [25], Voice [10], Wealth (filthy rich) [50].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Enemy (dr. morrall; less-powerful, hunter, quite often) [-10], Secret (utter rejection; is a shy virgin from another world) [-10].

Skills

Area Knowledge (los angeles)-13 [1], Area Knowledge (ecstasy)-13 [1], Artist (drawing)-12 [2], Computer Operation-13 [1], Driving-10 [2], Math (applied)-13 [4], Persuade-12 [2], Physics-12 [4], Public Speaking-12 [1], Singing-12 [4], Sway Emotions-12 [2].

Equipment

Anything she wants.



Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

We launched our Shadowrun 4e session in fine style. I made dinner for the guys and it went very well. I think that investing character points in the Cooking skill is going to work out just fine. If you haven't checked out the YouTube video where I talk about the menu, well, I don't know what the hell your problem is. I kid, but do be sure to bookmark youtube.com/iridiazine.

My Shadowrun character is named Dillon. He's a down-on-his-luck gun-for-hire. Poor Dillon grew up in an abusive household and was tormented by his father for his sexual preferences. (Dillon cares little about the gender of his lovers; he just wants someone nice.) Eventually Dillon got away from his father and met Dane, a handsome, loving man, with whom Dillon had a passionate relationship.

Dane was a shadowrunner and he taught Dillon basic combat skills and tactics. While on a run together, Dillon made a tragic mistake and killed Dane in a friendly-fire incident. His heart broken and his self-confidence shattered, Dillon hopes to rebuild his reputation and perhaps one day find love again.

For this week's issue, I'd like to present a review of our first session on the back page, I share some photos and I even tucked a few recipes into the envelope.

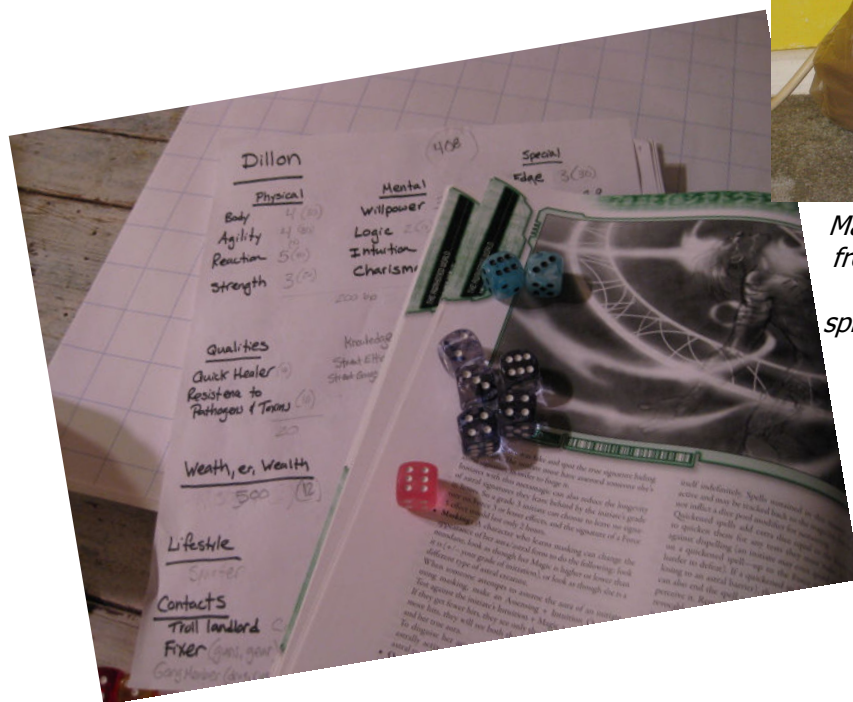
Until next time,
Christian



Two of the recipes from our Wednesday night game are included in the mailing of the print issues. Enjoy!



Master Cylinder monitors the game from his hiding spot. Izzy, the GM, was a good sport when my cat spread out onto his notes for a nap.



I underestimated how many six-sided dice I would need for Shadowrun. Eight weren't quite enough! I think my Initiative roll alone requires 10 dice when my Wired Reflexes 2 are engaged.

Actual Play

shadowrun 4e

Below is a write-up I scribbled for our first session. I won't inflict any more of them upon you in future issues of Iridia. I just wanted to share in case you might be interested in tracking our progress. Please visit iridiazine.net/shadows.htm to track our progress.

Session 1: June 10, 2009; Cutting Your Teeth

"We're all dead and this is hell."

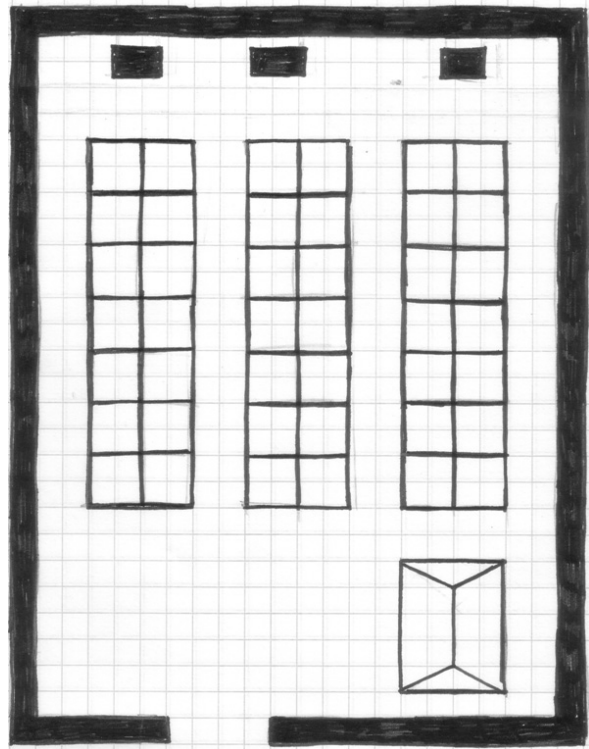
Dillon, welcoming Otto to the storage unit complex

Play began with the broke-ass characters contemplating the numerous, calamitous events that lead to their current situations. The PCs are squatters, eking out a miserable existence in the grimy butthole of the Redmond Barrens. Grundy's Self Storage is where they hang their hats. The storage units, with their cinder block walls and rusting, roll-down doors, have been converted into apartments. Some of the residents are lucky enough to have a cot, others own footlockers and a few even possess their own bucket that serves as a latrine. This is not the high life.

Regulars at the self-store include a real bastard of a troll named Koz. He delights in beating the hell out of all the humans. There's a reclusive japanese man named Kiroi. Dillon, a forlorn-looking man, shuffles about and a newcomer to the units is Otto, who appears to be a mage. Other regulars include an elf with severe developmental delays named Scrump. He worships an ork metal band named Chode and proudly wears a tee shirt with the band's name on it. His face is always smeared with chocolate. The landlord of the place is a troll named Grundy. Everyone suspects that Grundy is a retired shadowrunner.

The characters had little time for self-pity as gunfire soon rang out. Someone was shooting the hell out of one another in a back corner of the storage units. The characters fanned out in an attempt to discern what the heck was happening. The party discovered three slovenly shadowrunners pitted against two corporate types. The characters held back, not wanting to get in the middle of something nasty. Within a minute, all of the suits and runners lay dead or dying. One of the suits, an elf, was named Jesse Beane. At least that's what the ID found on him indicated. Evidentially, he was an exec in Ares Technology's magical technology department.

The group discovered an attaché case that was sealed with magical locks. As the party examined the case, Koz received a text message from its owner. The message was something to the effect of, "You have something that I want. Contact me so that an exchange can be arranged." Judging by all the dead bodies on the ground, it was unlikely that such an exchange would go smoothly...



The self-store where the characters live. The three long buildings represent a block of storage units. Each square is a 10' x 10' unit. There is a wall around the complex and a large office where Grundy the troll lives. The black rectangles at the top of the map are dumpsters, where trash and bodies are deposited.

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

On Point

I said I wasn't going to inflict any additional Actual Play columns upon you, but I lied. Last week was rather crazy. The end of the school year is always nuts, so I didn't have as much time to write as I had hoped.

One thing I did have time to do is to work on some food-related material. Instead of developing a project about food and gaming, I decided to edit out the gaming. I started a food blog where I'll post recipes, videos and random babblings. I'll even publish a digest format cookbook from time to time. The project is called Cook and Destroy. If you are interested, please visit CookAndDestroy.com.

I was giving a really nice gift by my wife to commemorate the end of the school year: Monte Cook's Ptolus! Holy hell, the book is amazing. It's just a huge slab of a tome that is wonderfully written and gorgeous to behold. It's seriously the most stunning game-related product I've ever seen. Will I ever use it? I'm not sure, but I really hope to.

Until next time,

Christian



Actual Play

shadowrun 4e

Below is a write-up I scribbled for our second session. I think that we are slowly getting a handle on Shadowrun. The dice pool concept continues to confound some. From playing D&D for so long, I got used to streamlined dice rolling. Roll to hit, then roll for damage. Done.

Please visit iridiazine.net/shadows.htm to track our progress.

Session 2 June 17, 2009; The Posse of Mayhem

"Is that ranch dressing or Yeti cum?"

a snide remark made about Short Stack's meal

Our session started with the aspiring runners trying to figure out what the hell to do with the mysterious case. A common question the group asked was, "Why did this aborted exchange go down at Grundy's?" Generally, Grundy's place is very quiet. An occasional Fixer, Grundy the troll is generally in the know about meets in the area. Baffled, the party cruised down the street to a bar called Keeze's Place. Keeze's is well-known for being a neutral ground. Perhaps someone there would know why a violent meet was planned at Grundy's self storage units.

When the group arrived at the club, they discovered that Chode was playing. (Chode is a local ork/troll death metal band.) Scrump had tagged along and he was soon in head-banging ecstasy. Koz introduced Dillon to Keeze.

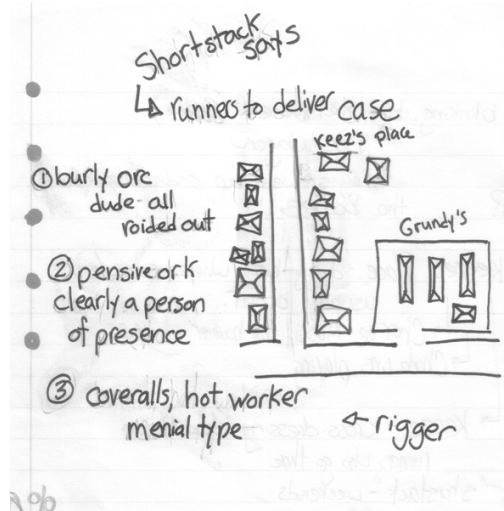


I made the guys grilled steaks with a blue cheese sprinkle, grilled pears and an arugula-walnut salad.

It turned out that Keeze was an effeminate Dwarf with a penchant for long nails, hair extensions and silk gowns. Dillon flirted with Keeze in an attempt to divine more information. The banter yielded the name of a Fixer who might have set up the run that went bad at Grundy's. The Fixer in question - Short Stack - was known to be a greasy scumbag. Short Stack handled the kinds of jobs that other Fixers avoided - things like wet work.

Eventually, the group was able to meet up with Short Stack. Before the meet, the party discovered that they were being tailed by a sniveling ganger named Cyrus a.k.a. Dave. Dave had been hired by some mysterious individual to keep tabs on the runners. It's reasonable to assume the mystery person is the individual who wants the case and messaged the party to that effect last session.

So anyway, Short Stack turned out to be a real douche. He was sweaty, morbidly obese, fingers dripping in ranch dressing (or Yeti cum) and his mouth was stuffed with chicken tenders. Short Stack confessed to knowing something about the run, but refused to give any additional information. He wasn't very helpful and struck the runners as being a real jerk. The group left the meeting dissatisfied. As they were leaving, they were contacted again by the mysterious figure, who had messaged them and hired Dave to trail them. A meet was requested and details are to be determined later.



A scan of my notes from the evening.

Dillon

gun-for-hire

Physical

Body 4
Agility 4
Reaction 5 (7 w/ reflexes)
Strength 3

Mental

Willpower 3
Logic 2
Intuition 4
Charisma 3

Special

Edge 3
Essence 2.9
Initiative 9 (11 w/ reflexes)

Qualities

Quick Healer
Resistance to Pathogens and Toxins

Wealth

498 Nuyen

Lifestyle

Squatter



Contacts

Grundy (landlord)-Conn 3/Loy 3
Fixer (guns, gear)-Conn 3/Loy 3
Gang Member (drugs, rumors)-Conn 3/Loy 3
Keeze (fixer)-Conn 1/Loy 1

Skills

Athletic Skill Group-4 (climbing, gymnastics, running, swimming)
Close Combat Group-4 (blades, clubs, unarmed melee)
Firearms Group-4 (automatics, longarms, pistols)
Pilot (ground craft)-1
Street Knowledge-1
Computer-1
Dodge-1
Street Etiquette-2

Cyberwear

Com Link—Sony Emperor (Response 2/Signal 3)
Wired Reflexes 2
Cybereye Basic System with eye recording unit, image link, low-light vision, smart link, thermographic vision, flare compensation

Gear

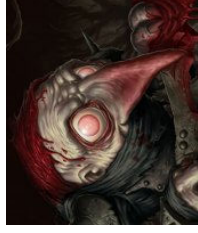
Colt America L36, Damage 4P, Mode SA, Ammo 11C
Armor Jacket Ballistic 8/Impact 6
RFID tags

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new



Behold the Balor!
page 5



Red Caps on the
loose...
page 6



Her apartment
smells like micro-
wave popcorn and
cigarettes.
page 17



YOUR DAD WAS A LEVEL 22 NECROMANCER

He didn't bitch about server lag. Your dad put on his ears and his green boots and didn't care who saw. He rolled to feel up his elf girlfriend after kicking Acererak's ass in the Tomb of Horrors. He set his classmates on edge. He was a nerd before it was cool. And he didn't give two shits what comic books Megan Fox reads.

DAMN RIGHT YOUR DAD PLAYED IT



Dungeons & Dragons



AMANDA CHOI

Concept: Pampered Lick who foolishly dreams of a fairytale ending
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Lust

Mental Attributes (tertiary): Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes (secondary): Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes (primary): Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills (tertiary): Academics 2, Computer 2
Physical Skills (secondary): Athletics 4, Drive 2, Firearms 1
Social Skills (primary): Empathy 2 (Specialty: Emotions), Expression 3 (Specialty: Strip Tease*), Persuasion 3 (Specialty: Seduction*), Socialize 3

*For Seduction and Strip Tease checks, add 3 bonus dice to check for wearing alluring outfit (white corset, high boots, thong), perfume and setting a romantic mood.

Health: 8
Morality: 7
Willpower: 5
Size: 5
Speed: 9
Initiative Mod: 5
Defense: 2
Armor: None
Merits: Resources 3 (3), Striking Looks 2 (2) Contact (enigmatic lover) 1 (1)

Weapons/Attacks
Glock 17 (9mm): Dam 2(L), Ranges 20/40/80, Clip 17+1, Strength 2, Size 1, Dice Pool 5

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new

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I dream in 25mm.....	5	few stamps, a letter, a couple of
<i>miniatures and terrain</i>		bucks or a PayPal donation to the
Actual Play.....	6	zine. Send funds via PayPal to:
<i>notes from my game</i>		christian@iridiazine.net or visit
Faces in the Crowd	8	iridiazine.net to donate online.
<i>world of darkness</i>		

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ON POINT

Hello everyone. It's been months since I last wrote. In light of that, I hope you'll indulge me in a much longer than usual On Point column.

I quit writing for a while.

I quit *Iridia*. I deleted all of the .pdf versions of the issues and was all set to cancel my web hosting. But I just couldn't do it. The reason why I couldn't quit this zine is very simple – there was no good reason to. Why go in a different direction when *Iridia* is just fine as it is? I apologize for any confusion and the long delay between issues. I guess that's how it goes sometimes.

destination unknown

I started a blog called "destination unknown" and so far I like the experience. The blog provides me a forum to air out some ideas that may not fit in an issue of *Iridia*. I also like the ability to track other gamers' blogs. I can learn a lot from reading about the games other people play and how they play them.

If I have a complaint about blogging, it's that one-way communication is often the norm. If someone comments on something I write, I always respond, and then make sure I follow it up with a visit to their blog.

I look forward to seeing if there's any interplay between this zine and the blog. Even if there's not, I'll still bumble along. I encourage you to visit the blog at <http://unknownzine.blogspot.com>.

Prison Mail

A while back I received a letter from a prisoner asking for a few issues of my former zine, *Iridia*. When asking for a copy of a zine, it's customary to either send a brief written note, a few stamps, a buck or two or a trade. The prisoner who wrote me sent a trade in the form of a few pages from a zine written by another prisoner. The few pages in question featured two reviews. *Iridia* was one of the zines reviewed. I laugh myself silly every time I read them. I'll present them on the following page.

She Can't Describe How Good He Makes Her Feel



She can't describe how good he makes her feel. It's unlike anything she's experienced with any other man. He comes by every few days. In anticipation, Amanda will chill some wine, light candles and put on that outfit he likes. Most of the time she can't even remember the sex, but the intensity lingers. Amanda is so spent from the effort that she will lay in bed all day. Occasionally there's blood on the sheets, but she has no idea where it comes from.

Amanda doesn't ask him many questions and he prefers it that way. He pays her bills and encourages her to take good care of her body. He never spends the night, but always brings flowers. Amanda wants more from the relationship, but she knows it will never happen. He won't even take her out to lunch or have breakfast with her. He must be married.

Still, she can dream.

night with her. She's not horny, but she is scared. Hopefully the guy will be nice and won't get too rough. That last guy was a nightmare. And perhaps tonight will be the night when whatever has been stalking Maria's apartment complex will finally break down the front door.

MARIA ESPINOZA

Concept: Lonely, scared woman reaching out for help against the unknown.

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Sloth

Mental Attributes (primary): Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes (secondary): Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes (tertiary): Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills (tertiary): Academics 1, Computer 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills (primary): Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1 (Specialty: Urban Survival), Weaponry 2

Social Skills (secondary): Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1 (Specialty: Seduction*), Socialize 1 (Specialty: Bar Fly), Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

*For Seduction check, add 3 bonus dice to check for wearing alluring outfit (bustier, tight jeans, black heels), perfume and buying a man a drink.

Health: 8

Morality: 7

Willpower: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Initiative Mod: 5

Defense: 2

Armor: None

Merits: Danger Sense (2), Fast Reflexes 1 (1), Fleet of Foot (1), Iron Stamina 1 (1), Language (Spanish) (1), Resources 1 (1)

Weapons/Attacks

Ornamental Sword: Damage 1(L), Size 2, Cost 1, Dice Pool 5

Small Axe: Damage 2(L), Size 1, Cost 1, Dice Pool 6

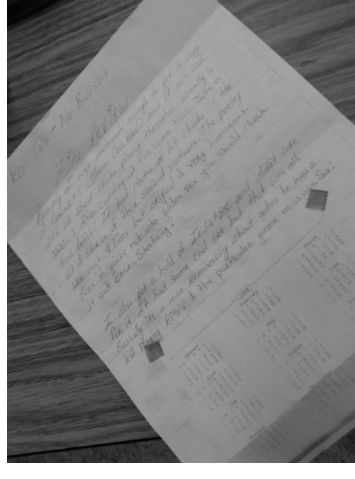
Real Talk - No Bullshit Zine Reviews

Recently I was fortunate enough to get a copy of Cascade #5 (Thanks Chris Robin) and it was cool. It's all about chicks pissing themselves, usually in public and often cumming at the same time. It's a real fetish! It had photos of hot chicks in the act and stories of their stained ventures. The poetry was each 4 lines but original and very humorous. Even if you're not into golden sex you should check it out. Entertaining!

I also got a hold of Iridia #85 and didn't care for it. It had some cool art but that was all. Basically it's a man reminiscing about when he was a kid playing RPGs and the particular game missions. SUX!

So there you have it. *Iridia* SUX! Seriously, how am I supposed to compete with women peeing in public? Oh well...

Real Talk—No Bullshit



The Old School Renaissance

I like the games coming out of the Old School Renaissance (OSR).

Labyrinth Lord (LL) is my favorite. I don't see it as a clone of the Moldvay basic D&D rules (which it is). Instead, I see it as a rules-light fantasy role-playing game that is a delight to play. For example, the lack of complex combat rules frees up the GM to narrate combat, to describe the outcome of morale rolls and to really breathe life into battles. It's so much fun! Sadly, my own LL game fell



Master Cylinder is intrigued by the OSR.

apart due to scheduling conflicts. Despite my love for OSR games, I find myself growing increasingly frustrated with some of the people involved.

You can't build fences around life. Things never stay the same. They change and evolve. I think people should do their best to try new things, especially when it comes to gaming. Last year I played D&D 3.5, Labyrinth Lord, Shadowrun 4e, Werewolf: The Apocalypse and Hero System. Because I try to remain flexible, it irritates me the way some members of the OSR cling to 1982.

There are some amazing games out there that span all kinds of exciting genres. I think it's stubborn to further isolate one's self in an already obscure hobby. And if you are going to live forever in 1982, why not mix in some Traveller, Tunnels and Trolls or The Fantasy Trip? D&D isn't the only old school.

In This Issue

I'm happy to share with you a nasty little creature I developed for my D&D 3.5 campaign. In play, the vile little Red Caps were quite the menace. I also share a new mini I am nuts over. Wizards can produce a really nice fig from time to time. Finally, I present six NPCs for use with the World of Darkness. They were a lot of fun to write and I hope they can be of value to you.

Until next time,
Christian

Her Apartment Smells Like Microwave Popcorn And Cigarettes



Her apartment smells like microwave popcorn and cigarettes. She doesn't have much money and spends a lot of time by herself. At night she falls asleep on the couch, an empty pint of vodka on the floor.

Maria didn't expect her life to turn out this way, but she also didn't plan on her husband leaving, her parents dying and she certainly didn't think she'd lose her job and have to move to such a shitty apartment complex.

There's something wrong with the area where she lives. Most of the other apartments in the 14 unit complex are vacant. She never sees the people who live in the occupied units. At night she hears strange sounds. Maria often hears grunting, glass breaking, people fighting and, well, other sounds she can't describe. Every once in a while, her door knob gets jiggled and large shadows are seen outside her window.

Maria bought some old axes and ornamental swords from a swap meet. It's all she has to protect herself. Maria just can't shake the feeling that whoever is outside the apartment at night is dangerous and it's only a matter of time before they come for her.

So tonight she's going to a bar. She's going to clean up as best as she can. After a few vodka shots, Maria will ask some man to spend the

JACKSON SWAGGART

Concept: Sick son of a bitch headed down a dark path.

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Mental Attributes (secondary): Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes (primary): Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes (tertiary): Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Mental Skills (tertiary): Computer 1, Crafts 3 (Specialty: welding, automobiles)

Physical Skills (primary): Athletics 2, Brawl 2 (Specialty: bar fights), Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills (secondary): Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3

Health: 7

Morality: 5 (Derangement: Paranoia (severe))

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 13

Initiative Mod: 6

Defense: 2

Armor: None

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2 (2), Fleet of Foot 2 (2), Iron Stomach (2), Resources 1 (1)

Weapons/Attacks

Chef's Knife: Damage 1(L), Size 1, Cost 1, Dice Pool 7

I DREAM IN 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

I guess I'm a sucker for pretty packaging. A few weeks ago I walked into my FLGS, Aero Hobbies on Santa Monica Blvd. I wandered over to the minis section and beheld the new D&D minis expansion, Legendary Evils. The new line of minis is displayed with a large or huge figure plainly visible, and five unseen miniatures in the packaging.

What immediately caught my eye was the huge Balor. I quickly bought the pack and eagerly pried open the plastic.

The Balor is a thing of beauty. It's big, intimidating and looks ready for damage. It wields a flaming whip and characteristic lightning sword.

In D&D 3.5, the version of the game I play, the Balor is a CR 20 monster.

The problem for a party is that they'd never encounter a

Balor on its own. As a general of demonic armies, the Balor can summon other demons to its aid. I'd also imagine that the Balor would be surrounded by any number of servitors and minions. Because the Balor is such a powerful foe, I'll probably create a new monster and use the Balor mini to represent it.

You can purchase this version of the Balor for about \$12 on eBay. The previous version, which was released in the Underdark expansion, goes for \$38 or so. Both figures are great, but I'd go with the less expensive one.



ACTUAL PLAY

notes from my game

I wanted to create a nasty little forest dweller for the PCs in my D&D 3.5 campaign to battle. Inspired by an illustration for the Magic the Gathering CCG, I came up with the Red Cap.

The Red Caps hail from a dark and twisted section of the Vesve, a Fey realm where few outsiders dare to tread. They sally forth on moonless nights to gather slaves and trophies. The Red Caps are so named for their penchant of dipping their woolen caps in the blood of their enemies.

In combat, Red Caps prefer to lob poisoned javelins, then fall back. They will hide and attempt to backstab with poisoned short swords. They are insane with their desire for murder and mayhem, so they will fight to the death.

When the Red Caps made their debut in a session, the players were unimpressed. As soon as they had to make Fort saves for poison and were Back-

stabbed, well, suddenly the little Red Caps inspired a bit of fear. Fortunately for the PCs, the Red Caps have only 4 hit points, so they are easily dispatched.



His Bag Is Packed And Someone Is Going To Get Hurt



His bag is packed and someone is going to get hurt. Badly. Jackson doesn't know who he's going abduct and torture, but he doesn't care. The only thing he knows is that someone is finally going to give him the respect he deserves. They are going to beg and cry and plead with him. For the first time in a long while, he will be the center of attention and he will be in total control. It's Jackson's time to be in the spotlight and the thought of it is giving him an erection.

Jackson wasn't always out of his goddamn mind, but life has a way of wearing on a man. An ex-wife, kids who want nothing to do with him, being broke all the time, an asshole of a boss, past due notices, all of it. He just wants to get it all out of his system. He knows that if he just annihilates another human being, then all of his pain and anger will be released. Right? It's got to work. And if it doesn't, he'll just try again. And again. And again.

Jackson cranks Pantera in his truck's CD player, takes a swig of Jack and hits the road. He's looking for someone and when he finds them, it's going to be on.

STEVEN TEAGUE

Concept: Loner voyeur with a trust fund to fuel his mania

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Sloth

Mental Attributes (primary): Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes (tertiary): Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes (secondary): Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills (primary): Academics 3, Computer 3 (Specialty: streaming video), Crafts 3 (Specialty: computer repair), Investigation 2

(Specialty: video surveillance)

Physical Skills (tertiary): Drive 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 1

Social Skills (secondary): Empathy 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Health: 7

Morality: 7

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Initiative Mod: 5

Defense: 2

Armor: None

Merits: Resources 4 (4), Unseen Sense (3)

Weapons/Attacks

Steven will not fight, choosing to run or collapse into the fetal position.

RED CAP

Small Fey

Hit Dice: 1d6+1 (4 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 15 (+1 size, +2 leather armor, +2 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-3

Attack: Short sword +2 melee (d4) or javelin +4 ranged (d4)

Full Attack: Short sword +2 melee (d4) or javelin +4 ranged (d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Backstab, poison use, darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -1

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wiz 9, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +5, Spot +2

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure and Equipment: 1 vial anti-toxin, 2 doses black adder venom, leather armor, short sword, javelin, 1 polished piece of rose quartz worth 2 gp.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Backstab: Red Caps are not as skilled or as subtle as Rogues, but they still know that fastest way to their prey's heart is through the ribcage. A Red Cap may perform a backstab against an opponent who does not get his Dex bonus to AC. This does not include flanked opponents and may not be performed at range. A backstab does an additional 1d4 points of damage. All the limits of sneak attacks apply to the backstab ability.

Poison: If time allows, Red Caps will coat their short sword or javelin heads with black adder venom (Injury DC 11, Initial Damage 1d6 Con, Secondary Damage 1d6 Con). They carry two doses of the venom.

FACES IN THE CROWD

world of darkness

One of these days I'd like to run a chronicle set in the World of Darkness. Like all good WoD campaigns, there'd need to be plenty of drama and tension. Certainly a good way to achieve that would be to introduce compelling NPCs.

If I'm diligent, the Faces in the Crowd series will allow me to compile personalities and stat blocks to inflict upon the players and their pack, coven, court, whatever. Because I'm not sure what the eventual chronicle will be about, I'm leaving certain details in the NPC descriptions vague.

Most noticeably, I'm not providing any suggestions on how the NPCs might interact with the player characters. For example, if we end up playing Werewolf: The Forsaken, the pack might take exception to Amanda Choi living in their neighborhood. Why tolerate a vampire showing up every few days to visit its Lick? However, if the party were vampires themselves, they might be interested in seeing if they couldn't seize Amanda for their own use.

All of the NPCs in this first installment were built with the System Rulebook.

Who Watches The Watcher?



Who watches the watcher? Steven is increasingly preoccupied with this question. From his computer, Steven keeps an eye on the city. He has rented at least a dozen apartments, setting up a computer and webcam in each one. The video streams live online and Steven sits at his desk hour after hour, watching.

Steven can't articulate what he's looking for, exactly. He doesn't even understand his compulsion to do so. If pressed for details as to why he spends so much time watching video of alleys, intersections and abandoned buildings, he'll simply say, "I don't know. But sometimes I think I see things." He will not elaborate upon what "things" he sees. Steven isn't really sure himself.

Steven is always on the move. After a while, people begin to figure out that cameras are watching their street or building. Sometimes they are resentful and break into one of the apartments to smash his equipment. Other times, a creepy-looking individual might stand in front of the camera, staring. It's as if they can see him and know his identity and location.

Such events add to Steven's paranoia. He likes to be the one who watches. He doesn't want it the other way around. Every few months Steven will rent new apartments, set up new cameras and begin the operation anew.

DAVID JORDAN

Concept: Unwanted young man who knows a lot of secrets

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Envy

Mental Attributes (primary): Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes (secondary): Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes (tertiary): Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills (primary): Academics 3, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Science 3

Physical Skills (secondary): Drive 2, Firearms 2 (Specialty: pistol), Stealth 3 (Specialty: moving in darkness)

Social Skills (tertiary): Animal Ken 1, Streetwise 3 (Specialty: places to hide out)

Health: 7

Morality: 7

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Initiative Mod: 6

Defense: 3

Armor: None

Merits: Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fleet of Foot 1, Fresh Start, Resources 1, Strong Back

Weapons/Attacks

.38 Special: Dam 2, Ranges 20/40/80, Capacity 6, Strength 1, Dice Pool 8

The Loud Ones Never Last Long



The loud ones never last long. That's because he just can't stand noisy neighbors. They make him mad. And when he gets mad, he goes into his tool box. Sometimes he'll just smash their headlights. Other times he might take out his anger on their pet. That's usually enough to drive off the offending neighbors.

But every few years a real incorrigible moves into the neighborhood. Young people mostly, college students. They just don't get the messages he tries to send, so he's forced to rely upon a more direct form of communication.

He hides in the bushes or behind the trashcans in their back yard. When one of the loud partying, music blasting punks comes out, he grabs them and hammers away. That generally does the trick. The moving van usually shows up the next day.

STANLEY BREWER

Concept: Angry bachelor who wants everyone to shut the hell up

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Mental Attributes (secondary): Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes (primary): Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes (tertiary): Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills (secondary): Academics 1, Computer 2, Craft 4
Physical Skills (primary): Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Stealth 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills (tertiary): Intimidation 4

Health: 7

Morality: 5 (Derangement: fixation (mild))

Willpower: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Initiative Mod: 5

Defense: 2

Armor: None

Merits: Quick Healer, Resources 3 (3)

Weapons/Attacks

Claw Hammer (blunt side) 1(B), Size 1/S, Durability 3, Dice Pool 8
Claw Hammer (clawed end) 0(L), Size 1/S, Durability 3, Dice Pool 7

At Night The Walls Close In



At night the walls close in. He lays on the floor, barely breathing. He feels like porcelain, like if he takes too deep of a breath, he'll shatter. When it gets to be too much, David grabs his coat and heads outside.

It's stupid to walk around his neighborhood at night, but he doesn't worry about it. Life has already taken all of the shots that matter anyway, so there's little to lose. As David walks the streets he tries to avoid other people. He'll stand in the bushes, in doorways or hide behind a dumpster - anything to avoid people.

People are loud. They stand too close and their breath smells. People can be cruel and no matter how hard he tries to make friends, he always fails. Sometimes David feels like there's something terribly wrong with him, but he can't figure out what it is.

From his long walks David has seen a lot. He knows where that cop with the red hair takes prostitutes. He's seen the abandoned building where a biker gang mixes meth. He knows which storm drains can be used to hide something that will never be found again.

Like a good prisoner, David always goes back to his cell at the end of the night. He locks the door behind him, puts his revolver and flashlight on the table and lays back on the floor, waiting for the walls to close in once again.